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IN FOCUS

The presidential address of the Sangita Kalanidhi at the annual conference of the Madras Music Academy could be a window into the mind of those elite few artistes, who by dint of unstinting hard work, relentless pursuit of goals, and great intellectual and physical effort have attained exalted levels of excellence. Take a peep into the musical perspectives of the latest awardee Shri Palghat R. Raghu in this issue.

Analysis of musical compositions brings out subtle nuances and is as essential as, may be an archeological guide, to understand the story that every sculpted rock has to tell in a Chola temple, over and above merely appreciating the overall beauty of the edifice. Savour Subbarama Dikshitar's compositions with V. Subrahmanyam.

Behind the visible face of the performing arts namely the artistes, are a band of silent workmen called musicologists who study, research, interpret and elucidate on manuscripts, inscriptions and parchments to illuminate various aspects of music. Read the efforts of one such person 'Sangeetacharya' Dr. Vyzarsu Balasubramanyam in the first part of his article, Sangita Nibandhah – Review of an Unpublished Manuscript.

As Smt. D.K. Pattammal enters her 90th year, A. Seshan reviews a book on her and throws more light on this living legend, while Kripa Subramanyam gives an account of the 2007 music season. Jyothi Mohan interviews Dr. R.K. Srikantan who gave one of his trademark sampradaya concerts as Sangeethanjali to Mahaswami. As aware as our readers may be of Indian classical music, how is classical music faring elsewhere, in our neighbouring country for instance? Leaf through the Pakistan diary and find out. The spotlight is turned on eminent chitraveena artiste N. Ravikiran in this issue by one of his disciples Savita Narasimhan, followed by an interview with rising star Sikkil Gurucharan, Sangeeta Shiromani awardee. N. Hariharan writes an essay on aesthetics and spirituality. Catch up with events of the past quarter in the reports.

We mourn the demise of Smt Sulochana Pattabhiraman, a multi-faceted personality in the Carnatic music world. May her legacy, guide and inspire the future generations.

**Presidential Speech of Vidvan Shri Palghat R. Raghu
at the 81st Annual Conference and Concerts at
THE MUSIC ACADEMY MADRAS (15-12-2007)**

When there is a quest for excellence, it has always been in us to strive to the utmost limits of our physical and mental capabilities to set a new goal when one is reached. For, after all, just as Gibran says "there is a space between man's imagination and man's attainment that may only be traversed by his longing". When one ponders on occasions such as this, one finds that credit can be attributed to one outstanding reason or cause. In fact, I must state that today's function and my standing before all of you could be ascribed to the divine instrument Sogasuga Mridanga Taalamu-the Mridangam.

It just seems like the other day that I started playing the Mridangam and 67 long years have flown past. It has been an enlightening journey - the yearning, the toil, progress and the joy of success - you could well say that I have had an extraordinary time when I look back on all those eventful years, glimpses of which I propose to share with you this evening.

Meanwhile, I have a confession to make. The confession is that all my life there has been only one goal in my mind and that is to play the Mridangam and to ruminate about playing the Mridangam. It has given me such exquisite joy. The fact that I am able to play the Mridangam and delight the general public is in itself a reward. However, to top it all, the coveted award of "Sangeetha Kalaanidhi" is also to be

conferred on me - a great honour.

We were repatriates from Burma. Burma is known for



teak, but my association with teak ended with Burma and my association, thereafter, was with a different kind of wood, the wood that is got from the Jackfruit tree and which has been found the most suitable for making the Mridangam. I started playing the Mridangam at the age of 5 and was coached by Tinniam Venkatarama Iyer when he came to Burma and even had me play a concert there. Even so, I would have, like any normal youngster, finished my graduation and possibly taken up a government job but for the fact that destiny intervened in the form of the great genius Palghat Sri Mani Iyer. I heard him and was entranced. I wanted nothing else but to be in his presence, to learn from him and play like him. It became an obsession, so indomitable that my grandfather could not contain it. Soon, I was taken to Sri Mani Iyer and thereafter my college education was extra-curricular activity and Mridangam became curricular.

I now have to tell you of the concerts that my great guru played accompanying veterans like Ariyakudi Sri Ramanuja

Iyengar, Maharajapuram Sri Viswanatha Iyer, Musiri Sri Subramania Iyer, Chembai Sri Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Sri G.N. Balasubramaniam to name only a few stars of the past. To each of them he brought his unique impress of compelling mesmerism through navigated patterns of magical quality. Blessed it was to be alive in those times and sheer heaven to be present there at those concerts.

More than the number of hours that Sri Mani Iyer sat and taught me it was the subtle directions and tips that he would give us combined with the opportunity of watching, assimilating and imbibing even as he played for the great artists of the past which constituted the core of my training under him. Sri Mani Iyer himself took personal interest in my career by recommending me to many artists and to Sabhas besides taking a paternal interest in my life. I believe I had a very special place in my Guru's heart, which to me is the highest award, as you would all agree, that I could ever aspire for. I was then inducted into playing for several eminent Mahavidwans like Ariyakudi Sri Ramanuja Iyengar, Sri G.N. Balasubramaniam, Madurai Sri Mani Iyer and others with all the veterans displaying extraordinary affection and solicitude for their younger accompanist. Thereafter, there was no turning back and I was firmly embedded in the saddle of professional music.

Gratitude is not a word to be lightly bandied about. "Guruvu Chillaginja, Guruvu bramaramu, Gurude bhaskarudu, Gurude bhadru" (Saint Tyagaraja). What I owe

to my guru Sri Palghat Mani Iyer is something very sacred and so special that it defies description such that mere words would never suffice to convey its depth.

My fascination for various great vidwans including Sri Palani Subramania Pillai had an impact in my evolution. Sri Palani had a special affection for me, which he expressed on more than one occasion. As for me I was delighted with the intricate patterns and the complex laya matrices that he wove particularly in misra chaapu tala. These were all great sources of inspiration and I spent countless nights of sleeplessness marvelling at the immensity of the various possibilities for improvisation.

All the veterans of the past as I said earlier, treated me with paternal affection. I recall with particular relish and emotion my association with Sri G.N. Balasubramaniam, who took such an abiding interest in my career and even described me as one of his eyes. Such a comment, from a person known for his reticence was a rare honour that I would ever cherish.

In this context, I recollect my good fortune to have had the benevolent affection of Alleppey Sri K. Parthasarathy Iyengar popularly known as "Papasaami" on whose initiative I was invited at the age of 15 to accompany Sri Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar.

Capitalizing on the continuity of a vibrant tradition, a further refinement was brought to the art of Mridangam playing by Tanjore

Sri Vaidyanatha Iyer, and popularized by my charismatic guru. Following in their footsteps, I had always felt that a Mridangist should specially enhance and boost the main artiste in the role of an accompanist. The mood of the song, the music and the musician must all be brought out in their infinite variety so as to be presented as a composite whole to the public. Every concert of mine, I have endeavoured to make educative, both to the public and the cognoscenti because, that, I feel is the role of an inspired artist. He must not only entertain but also elevate. Standards should not be allowed to fall for any reason because the greats with whom I have been associated were very popular, yet never pandered to low taste. Just as a vocalist or a main artist indulges in manodharma in raga exposition, niraval or kalpanaswaram, there is immense scope likewise for a Mridangist. On-the-spot improvisations and taking uncharted paths on the road to discovery of something new can be exciting both for artists and listeners as collaborators.

I am of the considered view that knowledge and appreciation of music in general is a prerequisite for a sensitive Mridangist. The main artist likewise, must have a certain level of awareness of the nuances of Mridangam playing and sensitivity to the Mridangist's line of thought. From this meeting of minds alone can emerge, a meaningful interaction leading to greater levels of excellence in a concert. It is not the taala alone that is relevant- the "Kaalapramanam" or the pace would be equally significant. On certain occasions,

with conditions being just right in a concert, it can lead to the Mridangist experiencing a state of ecstasy and an altered state of consciousness. "Thaniaavarthanam" can never be considered in isolation and must always be an extension of the krithi for which it is played as a natural flow and a logical extension of the mood of the krithi. The lighter compositions call for a different consciousness altogether with the approach 'being different.'

Earlier in the speech, I spoke about the Mridangam as being divine. However, constant meditation and ceaseless striving by human effort would be a '*sine qua non*' in highlighting and bringing out the divinity in art. This I would think should be the true aspiration of any artist.

The role of rhythm or laya has been spoken of by poets with cosmic connotations right from the rotation of the earth, the roll of the waves, to the sway of the trees and the flight of birds. In practically everything in nature, you can see laya or rhythm in action. I would like us all this evening to look at something that is very basic to our existence, which is our heartbeat. The heart forms the core of our existence and is a fundamental prerequisite to life. The proper functioning of the heart is critical to our existence but when it does not happen, the condition is described in medical parlance as "Arrhythmiasis" or irregular rhythm. So irregular rhythm or the absence of proper rhythm affects us all in a very fundamental manner and the "avalayam" or lack of laya can be a matter of great concern to human well being. Ladies and gentlemen, I am

sure you would all agree with me when I say that this establishes the primacy of place that rhythm or laya has in our existence.

I have had a long and interesting association with the Music Academy starting from the year 1944 when I first played here. I would like to recall what my illustrious guru Shri Palghat Mani Iyer spoke in his presidential address in 1966. He said that the Academy is like Lord Anjaneya who was unaware of his own strength. This, he said in a positive manner to tell the Academy that its stature is of a very high order. I am certain that with the dynamic leadership of Shri N. Murali, the Academy would reach higher summits and more importantly continue to be a sanctuary that truly cherishes art and artists.

Youngsters today have an appealing spark of intelligence. I would therefore like to share some stray thoughts with them for reflection. Remember, as the poet Kalidasa said, "Puraanamithyeva Na saadhu sarvam" All that is old is not necessarily gold. If that be so, please draw from the pioneers of the past only whatever is relevant, useful and appropriate for the present. If you follow this, you would not find yourselves wrecked on the shores of blind tradition but rather be firmly rooted in innovation based upon dynamic tradition. Please do question, but at the same time do not discard all that is old and venerable because you might be missing something that is truly valuable. Please do use your intellect because it is given only

to be used, but also remember in the ultimate reckoning the intellect has to be tempered by the heart. Aesthetics is an elusive concept and would not submit itself to be arrested merely by the intellect. It demands much more from all of us. It demands our hearts and even our souls.

I would reaffirm to your earnest consideration that many artists of the past knew their worth and kept a certain reserve and a dignity about them. In so doing, one does not have to come across as being arrogant. To indulge in abject prostration is also not appropriate because that would be essentially running down the noble art of which you are all special emissaries.

As the president of this year's conference, I am conscious of my duty to preside over the deliberations of the Experts' Committee. The Experts' Committee of the Music Academy has hoary antecedents having been presided over by such eminent Vidwans as Sri Tiger Varadachariar and Harikesanallur Sri Muthiah Bhagavathar. I am conscious of the singular honour bestowed on me in this regard and I earnestly seek the co-operation of all the experts and every one of you here to make the deliberations a meaningful success.

Let me close this pleasant interaction with you this evening by placing all this at the feet of my beloved parents and respected Gurus to whom all reverence is due from my part on this august occasion. □

SUBBARAMA DIKSHITAR - THE VAGGEYAKARAKA

by V. Subrahmaniam

(reproduced from his lecture demonstration at the Madras Music Academy on 28th Dec 2007)

The whole gamut of Carnatic music is built on the foundation laid by the magnificent compositions of great Vaggeyakarakas - especially the Trinity, Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastri. Their creations were outpourings of bhakti with high lyrical and musical excellence. Muthuswamy Dikshitar's compositions revealed his deep knowledge of the Vedas, Shastras and erudition in Sanskrit, the language which he used for his creations. He has chosen Venkatamakhi's music thought in the exposition of his kritis. The depth of Sahitya and Sangeeta Bhava in his compositions, have no parallel. Later generation composers have drawn their inspiration from the legacies left behind by the Trinity.

Subbarama Dikshitar belonged to the Dikshitar family as he was the grandson of Baluswamy Dikshitar, the youngest brother of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. He was born in 1839. Subbarama Dikshitar, though he became known later in this name, was named as Balasubramaniam by his parents. Baluswamy Dikshitar, having no male progeny, adopted Subbarama. After the demise of Muthuswamy Dikshitar in 1835, Baluswamy Dikshitar succeeded him as Asthana Vidwan of the Ettayapuram Samasthanam, where Muthuswamy Dikshitar spent the last years of his life. Baluswamy Dikshitar took Subbarama Dikshitar when he was five years old to Ettayapuram, initiated him into Srividya Upasana and coached him intensely in

music, Telugu and Sanskrit including Kavya, Nataka, Alankara, Manucharitham, Chandas and Vyakarana.

Subbarama Dikshitar's first attempt at composing was in his 17th year when he presented before the Raja of Ettayapuram a tana varnam in Durbar raagam, ata thalam created by him. The composition was outstanding and as though to test his prowess, the Raja commanded him to compose a jatiswaram in Yamuna Kalyani stipulating that this should be done within an hour. The eduppu was also stipulated. Subbarama Dikshitar, being exceptionally brilliant, completed the task wonderfully to the great appreciation of the king.

There is a shloka in the Sangeeta Ratnakara of Sarangadeva defining a Vaggeyakaraka which is:

वाङ् मातुरुच्यते गेयम् धातुरित्यभिधीयते ।

वाचम् गेयम् च कुरुते यस्स वाग्गेयकारकः ।।

The words of a song are known as Mathu and the music is Dhathu. A person who creates both is a Vaggeyakaraka. Subbarama Dikshitar fits into this description ideally as the Mathu and Dhathu of the compositions are created by him and are par excellence.

Subbarama Dikshitar himself elucidates in detail the character and knowledge which a Vaggeyakaraka should possess in his text Sangeeta Prachina Paddhathi. A Vaggeyakaraka should have a thorough

and deep knowledge of grammar, various types of usages of words with their character and shades of meaning, the metric style such as Anushtup, various aspects of the Navarasas and deep insight into music, dance and allied art forms. He should be able to get rid of anger and hatred, should have the sharp intellect to bring out new varieties in his composing style and create musical compositions quickly, should be able to take others' views and criticisms and also successfully argue and establish his own stand in expert gatherings etc. Subbarama Dikshitar was a repository of all the above qualifications.

Subbarama Dikshitar's major contribution to Carnatic music was his Lakshana Grantha, Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarshini, the magnum opus of Carnatic music, the Sangeeta Prachina Paddhathi and the Prathama Abhyasa Pustakamu that have all gained pre-eminence, overshadowing his contribution as a Vaggeyakaraka. His contribution as a Vaggeyakaraka is of no mean measure. Compared to earlier great composers the number of his creations is not many.

While basically maintaining the style of Muthuswamy Dishitar, Subbarama Dikshitar displayed great versatility and produced not only kritis but also many Tana, Chowka and Pada Varnams, Swarajatis, Ragamalikas and Darus abounding in both Sahitya and Sangeeta Bhava with liberal swarakshara passages and alliterations. Presumably his close association with the royalty of Ettayapuram necessitated this as they were patrons of dance as well. It is important to note that

while compiling the Raga-Lakshana Grantha Sampradaya Pradarshini, Subbarama Dikshitar had adopted the classification of Venkatamakhi as expressed in Chaturdandi Prakashika, while in his own compositions he has chosen the later thinking of Govindacharya.

Subbarama Dikshitar's choice of the language Telugu for his creations is also surprising. Almost all his musical compositions and his writings are in Telugu. Why he did not choose Tamil, his mother tongue atleast for his writings is a wonder. He has also not followed Muthuswamy Dikshitar whose compositions are in Sanskrit.

Varnams: Subbarama Dikshitar has composed 12 varnams. Of these 4 are tana varnams, 3 are chowka varnams and 5 are pada varnams.

The tana varnams are:

1. Intamodi in Durbar - Ata
2. Sarasaksha in Kedaragowla - Adi
3. Varijakshi in Sahana - Khanda Ata
4. Kanchi Kamakoti in Kasiramakriya - Khanda Ata

It is to be noted that he has composed swara sahityam for the tana varnam in Kasiramakriya.

Pada Varnams:

1. Enta Ninne in Kamas - Tisra Eka
2. Sri Rajadhi Raja in Balahamsa - Khanda Ata
3. Sri Rajeevakshadi in Yadukula Kambhoji - Khanda Ata

4. Sri Maharajasritha in Athana - Khanda Ata
5. Sri Raja Raja in Athana - Khanda Ata

Chowka Varnams:

1. Samini in Anandabhairavi - Adi
2. Sarekanitu in Anandabhairavi - Adi
3. Sami Enthani in Surati - Tisra Eka

Daru:

1. Sarasagre in Natanarayani - Tisra Eka
2. Sri Garuda Ninnekori in Yadukula Kamboji - Adi

Kritis: Subbarama Dikshitar has composed 15 kritis:

1. Samin Nee Mahimalu - Bhairavi - Tisra Eka
2. Sivaramashramulanu - Bhairavi - Roopakam
3. Saraganana - Sriranjani - Roopakam
4. Sri Parthasarathini - Yadukula Kamboji - Adi
5. Tripurasundari-Natakuranji-Roopakam
6. Shankaracharyam-Shankarabharanam - Adi
7. Parashakti - Shankarabharanam - Roopakam
8. Kanthimathi - Kalyani - Roopakam

Ragamalikas:

9. Yenduku Rara - Navaratnamalika - Roopakam on Raja Jagaveera Muthuswamy Ettappa
10. Nee sarilera ni - Navaratnamalika - Tisra Eka on Padmanabha Dasa Rama Varma Maharaja of Travancore
11. Karava Mukkhanna - Navaratnamalika - Roopakam on Bhaskara Swamy Sethupathi of Ramanathapuram
12. Kaminchina Kalavathi - Ragamalika - Tisra Eka on Pasupathi Ananda Gajapathi Raju Maharaja of Vijayanagaram
13. Valapu Meeri - Ragamalika - Roopakam

14. Manathodu Enangina (Tamil) - Ragamalika - Adi
15. Vedu Katho - Ragamalika - Roopakam

Out of the 7 Ragamalikas, four are in praise of kings and presumably Subbarama Dikshitar's fame as a musical genius had spread widely and his royal patrons had honoured him.

Very few of his creations are handled by musicians in general. This may be because the pieces are highly sophisticated in musical content and to understand and assimilate the nuances and sancharas and to handle them effectively, the musician should possess a deep and abundant musical sense (sangeeta jnanam). Another reason as was already indicated earlier is that, the musical fraternity's attention has been totally diverted by Subbarama Dikshitar's musicological writings and text.

It is observed that Subbarama Dikshitar has set most of his compositions in Roopakam or Tisra Eka thaalam in preference to Adi talam, Tisra Triputa etc. The contemporaries of Subbarama Dikshitar were the sishya parampara of the trinity like Patnam Subramanya Iyer and Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan. Subbarama Dikshitar had a son whom he had named Muthuswami Dikshitar popularly known as Ambi Dikshitar. Ambi Dikshitar lived in the 20th century and was instrumental in handing down Muthuswami Dikshitar's kritis to T. L. Venkatrama Iyer, Smt. D. K. Pattammal, Sri S. Rajam and others.

With a view to understanding and enjoying the poetic and musical beauty of Subbarama Dikshitar's creations, I have

chosen the following kritis for an analysis of their content.

1. Enta Ninne Delupudura - Pada Varnam in Khamas - Tisra Ekam

In this varnam, the nayika addresses her beloved, Lord Thyagaraja of Tiruvarur, describing the pangs of separation. The varnam contains pallavi, anupallavi and four charanams with swara sahityam for muktayee and chittaswarams. The first charanam is followed by one chittaswaram with sahityam and the second, third and fourth charanams have two chittaswarams with sahitya passages each. The richness of sahitya and the smooth flowing Telugu words are apparent even to a layman in that language. The anuprasa alliteration packed into the swara sahitya of the second chittaswara after the third charanam is highly captivating:

*Saamraajyaphaladavinoda kruthapaada mahithaveda
Karuna raada piluvaraada palukaraada nathendra sreedha*

The usage of the short laghu words is found in the last chittaswara sahityam after the fourth charanam.

The usage of kakali nishada in the khamas ragam in which the varnam is set, is no surprise as this has been the traditional form handled by the trinity. It crept into this raga through padams and javalis and is widely accepted now.

The last charanam of this varnam begins with the swarams Sa-Ri-Ga-Ri-Sa in the tara sthayee with the sahityam Sri-Pu-Ra-Mu-Na. This prayoga appears a little unusual for Khamas ragam and more akin to Harikamboji.

My respected friend and guide Professor S. R. Janakiraman is a firm believer that all varnams have to be concluded by singing the pallavi and this was the tradition which got altered in later years for reasons unknown. True to his thinking, Subbarama Dikshitar has concluded with the singing of the pallavi.

2. Kanthimathi in Kalyani- Roopakam

This kriti on the consort of Lord Shiva known as Shalivateeshwara in Tirunelveli is very rich in musical and lyrical sophistication. This is not heard much in concerts. Smt Brinda and Mukta often included this piece in concerts and rendered it very touchingly.

- In the latter part of the anupallavi, Subbarama Dikshitar uses 'Kanthara' with different meanings revealing his poetic imagination and prowess. The word 'Kanthara' has been used twice and Kantha thrice. The first Kanthara is used to denote Upanishads (symbolically) and the second Kanthara is used to denote forest. These words are followed by Kantha meaning presiding lady. The three words together Kanthara Kanthara Kantha would mean presider of the Upanishad forest 'Shalivateepuri'. Kantha means the presiding lady of Shalivateepuri, Tirunelveli. The next Kantha - Kantha Vani Kantha - the first Kantha denotes Lakshmi, Vani, Saraswati and the second Kantha means the presider over Lakshmi and Saraswati and Vinitha Pada whose feet is praised by them.

The last two lines are also full of alliteration by the use of words sounding similar, Mura-Sura-Mora-Kim Chara-Dhara-Madhura-Adara-Dhara-Dhara. The meaning of the lines is: Mura Sunari Sodari Moralakincharada - Vishnu's sister, do you not hear my prayers Dhara-Dhara-Suta - daughter of the mountain, Madhura-Adhara - sweet lipped, DharaDhara-Kacha - waist as thin as a sword's edge. The whole kriti is set with Dwiteeya Aksharaprasam.

- Sri Parthasarathy Nee Sevimpani in Yadukula Kamboji-Adi. This monumental piece contains all possible sancharas of the ragam woven into it. The opening words of the pallavi Pa-Da-Sa with sahityam Par- Tha-Sa is a swaraaksharam. The word Parthasarathy has been used fully and also by splitting it into Partha-Sara and Thi by adding a prefix to give different shades of meaning in the pallavi and anupallavi.

- In the charanam Subbarama Dikshitar uses kari (meaning elephant) by adding a prefix or suffix to convey different meanings.

- Kari
- Dikkari
- Makari
- Karivelpu

- In the next line he has used the word Naru four times in sandhi conjunction with other letters.

- Naru Dhara twice
- Thanaru Talmi and Mannaroo

- The syllable Sara has been used in the next line four times.

- Saranamna
- Saradheeru
- Saradhi Garvahara
- Dasaradhi

- The next line contains Para four times in sandhi with other letters or syllables bringing out different meanings.

- Paramabhaktula
- Paramahimalo
- Paramadamana
- Paramatmudu

- The word guru again has been used eight times in the following lines.

- Gurukushabaraya
- Gurukmini
- Guruderugu
- Guruvukada
- Guruguha
- Gurunutha
- Gurupalatha
- Guruvukada

All the above lines have dwiteeya akshara prasam. The solkattu at the end gives a lilting effect to the whole kriti.

Shankaracharyam about Sankara Bhagavadpada is appropriately tuned to Shankarabharanam raagam. This piece is taken up in concerts often. The word Shankara has been used to give different shades of meaning.

All the above compositions go to prove the high poetic excellence and musical prowess of Subbarama Dikshitar as a composer.

Our best wishes to the various projects of
Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha



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SANGITA NIBANDHAH - Review of an Unpublished Manuscript

by 'Sangeetacharya' Dr. Vyzarsu Balasubrahmanyam, M.A. (Music), M.Phil (Music), Ph.D. (Music)

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Indian Music is unique not only in its rich repertoire of musical compositions, but also in its voluminous literature expounding the theoretical aspects of the art. The significant part played by the Lakṣaṇa Grantha-s needs no special elucidation, as these form the very instruments in tracing the historical evolution of our music. The works of various Lakṣanākara-s not only provide a valuable insight into the origin, development and progress regarding the theory and practice of music, but also pave the way for an analytical and critical discussion and are constructive from the point of musicology. While the musical practices keep changing from time to time, the theory tries to interpret the existing practice over the various centuries and the evolution of the theory and the existence of different views with reference to the current practice reflecting the progressive nature of the art:

Musicians have contributed a lot to the world of music through their compositions and treatises. A lot of research has been done on the published manuscripts. However, the contribution of many musicians is still in the dark in the form of unpublished manuscripts available at various libraries in India. There is every

necessity to explore this rich treasure and contribute more to the world of music.

Sangita Nibandhaḥ is one such treatise, which serves as an important link between the earlier works and the modern text books. It assumes importance as it discusses various aspects of music. Since such a valuable treatise has not been brought to light, this writing is a humble attempt to add to the available literature on various aspects of Music.

Source for the text

The work Sangita Nibandhaḥ is a Sanskrit treatise transcribed in Telugu. The manuscript is available in the form of a paper transcript at the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, with Accession No.14131.

About the manuscript

The manuscript of the work 'Sangita Nibandhaḥ' is in a fairly good condition and this transcript consists of 66 pages, with about approximately 20 lines per page. On examining the handwriting in the manuscript, it is observed that the entire treatise has been transcribed by a single person but the source for this transcript has not been mentioned.

A study of the manuscript further reveals that on the first folio of the manuscript, after salutations to Lord Ramanuja and Lord Hyagriva and invocative verses to Lord Hyagriva and Lord Viṣṇu, extending almost

to the beginning of the fifth page, there are a few verses which narrate the discussions between Gods, Narada and other Great Sages, wherein the greatness of Music, its elements and the greatness of Viṇa are enlightened. This is followed by verses, which give a detailed explanation of various kinds of Viṇa and different concepts in the science of music, under individual heads of description.

However, there are no colophons in any part of the manuscript, indicating the end of a topic or a chapter. Also, there is no colophon on the last page of the manuscript indicating the end of the treatise. A close observation of the manuscript reveals a few inaccuracies in the use of syllables, words etc., which necessitates the need for editing the work.

Scribal errors

This manuscript hardly has any scribal errors, except for a couple of letters overwritten at a few places and only three instances of scribal errors found, which is:

Page No. 22, Line No. 21 - ~~kramāyuduktā~~ ṣaḍja
pañcama-madhyama
pañcamāḥ

Page No. 46, Line No. 15 - ~~smṛta~~ śaraḥ

Page No. 55, Line No. 14 - ~~Jayasririti~~ Kathyate
S i m h a n a n d a n é
Prakīrtitah

About the author

Though the manuscript is neatly transcribed, there is no indication in the work as to who has authored this treatise. Hence, nothing can be affirmed in certainty about the author.

Period of Production

While gathering certain clues to know the date of this work, it was found that this work is certainly later than 'Sangraha Chudamani' of Govinda. This can be considered from the fact that Sangita Nibandhaḥ also deals with the nomenclature - Kanakangi, Ratnangi, - 72 mela scheme.

When we actually find a book like the Sangraha Chudamani or the Sangita Sastra Sankshepa, a work mentioning one Govinda as its author, dealing with the 72 mela-s, we are surprised to see that the names are not Kanakambari etc., ascribed to Venkatamakhi, but Kanakangi, Ratnangi etc., which are based on the ka-ṭa-pa-yadi system of computation. It is the view of some scholars that this new nomenclature is recent. Sangita Nibandhaḥ also discusses the seventy two mela-s, Kanakangi, Ratnangi etc., and other raga-s.

Further, this work also deals with the Brahma Vina, Vishnu Vina and Siva Vina and the 24 sruti mela-s with 34 Svara variations, which have also been discussed in 'Sangita Sara Sangrahamu' of Tiruvenkata kavi. Since this treatise is also believed to be belonging to the 18th Century, we can say that this work also belongs to the same period.

Also considering the other topics covered in this work relating to Tala etc., we may assume that the date of production of this work is somewhere around the early part of 18th century.

Contents of the Work

This work is in verses and it mentions that

there are three kinds of vina-s Brahma Vina, Vishnu Vina and Siva Vina. Each of these three vina-s is said to have four components - Sruti, Svara, Mela and Raga, which are explained in detail.

Sruti-s:

Sangita Nibandhaḥ speaks of a Brahma Vina, called by the name 'Mahati', held by Narada, which has twenty four places - the sruti-s. These twenty four places come from the twenty four letters of Gayatri and each of these sruti-s is given a two letter name (conforms to ka-ṭa-pa-yadi scheme) and are enumerated as Tivra (Yina), Kumudvati (Rana), Manda (Lina), Chandovati (Ghana), Dayavati (Mana), Ranjani (Tana), Raktika (Sena), Raudri (Dana), Krodha (Dhana), Vajrika (Naya), Prasarini (Paya), Priti (Thaya), Kanta (Loka), Marjani (Vaya), Kshiti (Suka), Rakta (Toya), Sandipani (Chaya), Alapi (Jaya), Madanti (Dheya), Rohini (Nara), Ramya (Kara), Ugra (Khara), Uddipani (Giri), Kshobhini (Vira).

The sruti names are said to have five Jati-s **Dipta** (Tivra, Raudra, Vajrika, Ugra); **Ayata** (Kumudvati, Krodha, Prasarini, Sandipani, Rohini); **Karuna** (Dayavati, Alapi, Kanta, Madanti); **Mridu** (Manda, Rakta, Priti, Kshiti); **Madhya** (Chandovati, Raktika, Ranjani, Marjani, Ramya, Uddipani, Kshobhini)

The author has explained two varieties of sruti-s.

1. **Suddha sruti** : Suddha sruti is a sruti which stands as one sruti
2. **Misra sruti** : Misra sruti is a combination of two sruti-s

Of these twenty four, fourteen are suddha

sruti-s and ten are misra sruti-s; when the ten misra sruti-s are doubled we get twenty. These twenty, together with the fourteen suddha sruti-s give thirty four sruti-s.

Describing the Vishnu Vina, called 'Kalavati' the author has given that the twelve odd places of the Brahma Vina become the twelve places or sruti-s of the Vishnu Vina. It is understood that these sruti-s take the equivalent odd-numbered places/houses of sruti-s (which belong to those of the ka-ṭa-pa-yadi scheme) Tivra (Yina), Manda (Una), Dayavati (Mana), Raktika (Sena), Krodha (Dhana), Prasarini (Paya), Kanta (Loka), Kshiti (Suka), Sandipani (Chaya), Madanti (Dheya), Ramya (Kara), Uddipani (Giri). It is further said that Vishnu Vina has a total of eighteen suddha and misra sruti-s.

The author further explains that the twelve even-numbered houses of the Brahma Vina become the twelve houses or sruti-s of the Rudra Vina, called 'Brihati', taking the equivalent even-numbered places/houses of sruti-s Kumudvati (Rana), Chandovati (Ghana), Ranjani (Tana), Raudri (Dana), Vajrika (Naya), Priti (Thaya), Marjani (Vaya), Rakta (Toya), Alapi (Jaya), Rohini (Nara), Ugra (Khara), Kshobhini (Vira). Of these twelve sruti-s, eight are suddha sruti-s and four are misra sruti-s; The misra sruti-s get doubled and give a total of sixteen sruti-s.

Svara-s:

At the outset Sangita Nibandhaḥ explains that nadam, the soul of sound, has been made to produce sapta svara-s, which originate from the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 15th, 7th, 21st and 23rd letters of Gayatri to become the seven svara-s - Shadja, Riṣabha, Gandhara, Madhyama, Panchama,

Dhaivata, Nishada, indicated by the solfa syllables Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni.

The author then describes the Heart of Svara, as comprising Mandra Madhya and Taraka, which stand for the heart, throat and head respectively and have Ilaja, Mandra, Vijnaya, Pingala, Madhyama, Suṣumni and Taraka as the pulse of the seven Svara-s. The author further explains that for all the three - Gods, Demons and the Mankind, the sruti-s and svara-s rise from six parts of the body - the navel, heart, throat, palate, nose and head.

The word Svara is then defined and then details of Grammar for Svara have been given followed by an explanation of the sounds of svara-s and their resemblance to the sounds made by birds and animals. The work then defines the four types of svara-s named Vadi, Samvadi, Vivadi and Anuvadi.

The author then discusses the prastara of svara-s and explains the variations in the terms Sampurna, Shadava, Oudava, Svarantara, Samika, Gadhika and Archika. Then, a table illustrating the prastara of sapta svara-s is given which enumerates the number of possible combinations of svara-s. The author seems to draw a parallel between the 24 sruti positions and the 24 letters of the Gayatri mantra, which have been distributed over the seven svara-s. However, he makes a statement here that though many works talk about 24 Sruti-s, Bharata and others have spoken of twenty two Sruti-s.

Having discussed the concept of twenty four sruti-s for the Brahma Vina, Vishnu Vina and Siva Vina, the author distributes

thirty four svara variations over the twenty four svarasthana-s. It is explained that there are:

Seven rishabha-s - prati suddha rishabha, suddha rishabha, prati chatussruti rishabha, chatussruti rishabha, prati shatsruti rishabha, shatsruti rishabha, chyuta gandhara rishabha;

Seven gandhara-s prati suddha gandhara, suddha gandhara, prati sadharana gandhara, sadharana gandhara, prati amtara gandhara, amtara gandhara, chyuta madhyama gandhara.

Four madhyama-s prati suddha madhyama, suddha madhyama, prati madhyama and prati panchama madhyama.

Seven dhaivata-s - prati suddha dhaivata, suddha dhaivata, prati chatussruti dhaivata, chatussruti dhaivata, prati shatsruti dhaivata, shatsruti dhaivata, chyuta nishada dhaivata;

Seven nishada-s - prati suddha nishada, suddha nishada, prati kaisiki nishada, kaisiki nishada, prati kakali nishada, kakali nishada, chyuta shadja nishada.

Thus, the author enumerates the seven rishabha-s, seven gandhara-s, four madhyama-s, seven dhaivata-s and seven nishada-s which along with shadja and panchama give a total of thirty four svara-s.

Like the Brahma Vina, the Vishnu Vina is also said to have seven svara-s, with Suddha and Misra variations, which give rise to 18 svara differences. It is given that while Shadja and Panchama are only one, Madhyama-s are known to be two; three each are Nishada and Rishabha and four

each are Gandhara and Dhaivata. Details of the names of these variations have not been given.

It is further explained that the Siva Vina also has seven svara-s, with Suddha and Misra variations, which give rise to 16 svara differences. They are:

Three rishabha-s - prati chatussruti rishabha, prati shatsruti rishabha, chyuta gandhara rishabha

Three gandhara-s - suddha gandhara, sadharana gandhara, amtara gandhara,

Two madhyama-s - suddha madhyama and prati panchama madhyama.

Three dhaivata-s - chatussruti dhaivata, shatsruti dhaivata, prati kakali nishada

Three nishada-s - prati suddha nishada, prati kaisiki nishada, chyuta shadja nishada

These fourteen svara-s along with the panchama and shadja become the sixteen svara variations.

However, it is further explained that there are other names given by Rishi-s, which are different and famous. They are:

Three rishabha-s - suddha rishabha, chatussruti rishabha, shatsruti rishabha

Three gandhara-s - suddha gandhara, sadharana gandhara, amtara gandhara

Two madhyama-s - suddha madhyama and prati madhyama

Three dhaivata-s - suddha dhaivata, chatussruti dhaivata, shatsruti dhaivata

Three nishada-s - suddha nishada, kaisiki nishada, kakali nishada.

These fourteen svaras along with the panchama and shadja become the sixteen svara variations.

(To be continued..)

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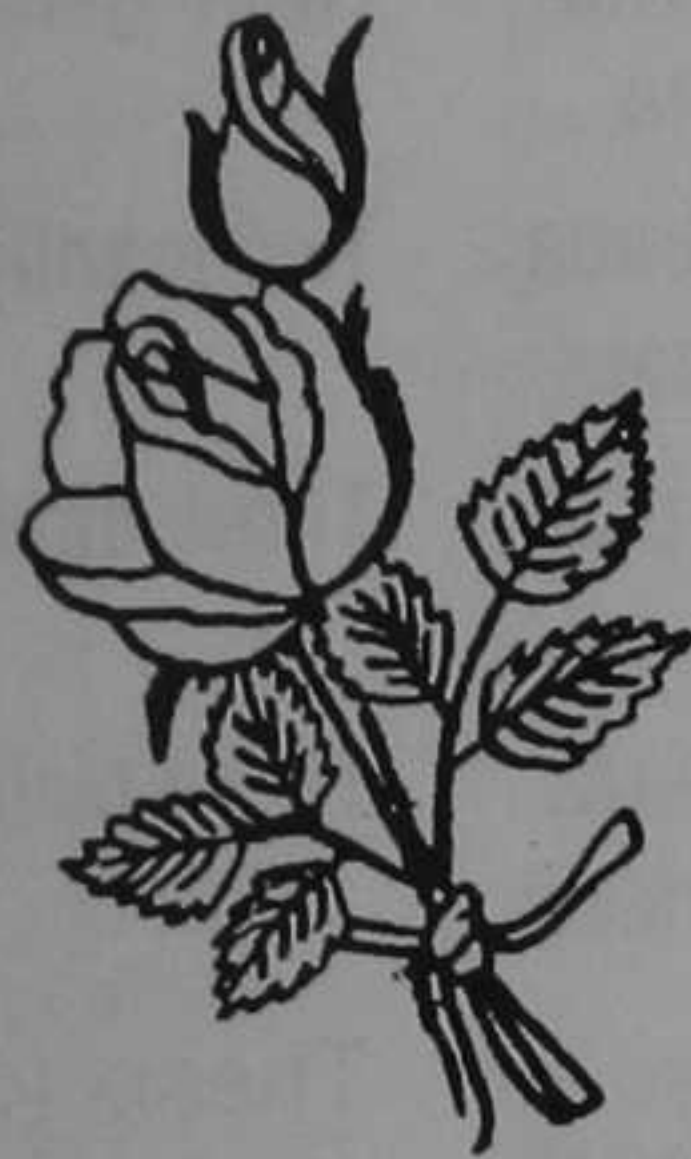
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BOOK REVIEW

DKP - THE DOYENNE OF CARNATIC MUSIC

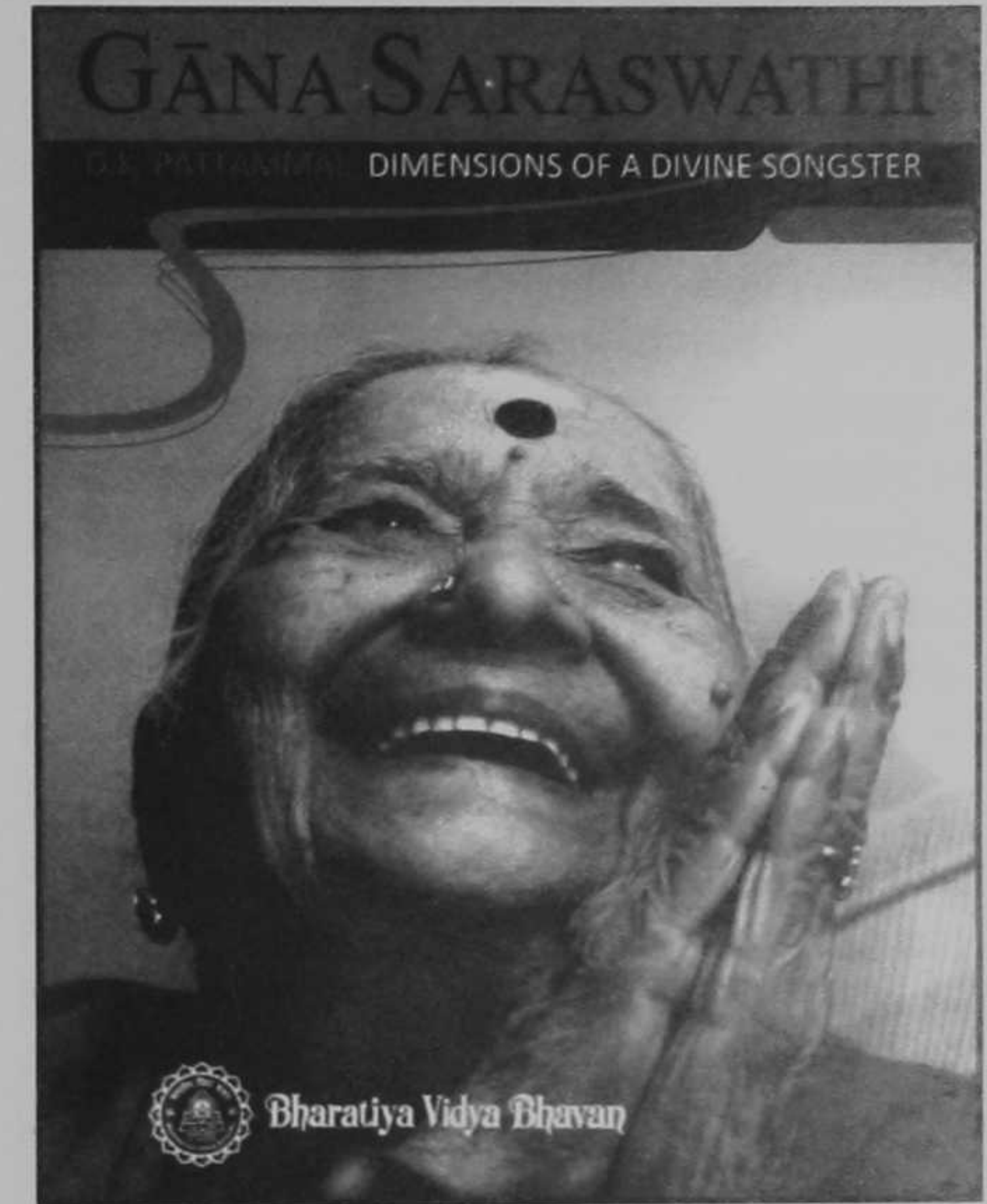
by A. Seshan

Gana Saraswathi - DK Pattammal: Dimensions of a Divine Songster, Nithya Raj, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore Kendra, 352 D. B. Road, R. S. Puram, Coimbatore 641 002.

Pages 128

Price Rs. 350/-

This book on the doyen of Carnatic music has come not a day too soon. March 28, 2008 marked the 90th birthday of D. K. Pattammal, she having completed 89 years of age and more than seven decades of an illustrious musical career. Her first full-fledged concert was in 1933. Due to reasons of health she has withdrawn from the concert circuit in recent years. The younger generation of musicians and rasikas need to know about the lady who broke new ground in the Carnatic music field at a time when it was dominated by highly chauvinistic males. Not long ago leading male violinists and percussionists considered it infra dig to accompany a female singer. It is to the credit of the female trinity, viz., MS, DKP and MLV, that it is no longer so. She was the first female singer to attempt Ragam, Tanam and Pallavi in concerts, which had till then been the preserve of the male. The general prejudice against vidushis was such that the males just assumed that they were good only for singing songs without engaging in what may be called art music.



The book consists of 10 chapters, lists of awards and honours, glossary of musical terms and acknowledgements. Besides, there are introductory messages from B. K. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, Swami Dayanandha Saraswathi and A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. The narration starts with an account of the early days of the musician. Her musical prowess was recognized even when she was a child. There is the interesting anecdote of Ramana Maharishi dropping honey on her tongue and predicting she would become a renowned artiste. (According to another version this writer has heard, the Maharishi dropped a

kalkandu - a piece of rock sugar - in her mouth.) The Paramacharya of Kanchi was impressed by her excellent diction in reciting Sanskrit slokas as a child. She absorbed the best in music by attending the concerts of Ariyakkudi, Musiri, Nayana Pillai and T. N. Rajarathnam. Her grounding in laya was laid by Nayana Pillai although he did not teach her formally. She was fired by patriotism and was bold enough to sing Bharatiyar's songs at public meetings and concerts in colonial days even though they were frowned upon by the British administration. A high point was her singing before Mahatma Gandhi at a public meeting in Kanchi when she was a young girl. She came to know that the chief guest was Gandhiji only later! Such was her innocence. An important turning point was her apprenticeship under the eminent judge-cum-musicologist T. L. Venkatarama Iyer from whom she learnt more than 200 Dikshitar kritis. They are authentic patantharas since Iyer had studied under Ambi Dikshitar, who belonged to the clan of Muthuswami Dikshitar. Even after reaching the heights of fame she never forgot her early mentors like the Telugu Vadhyar or Ammukutti Ammal, the Principal of her school, who had encouraged her in her musical pursuit. Saraswathi Stores (Columbia) sent a representative from Chennai to Kanchipuram to invite her to its studio to record her first 78 rpm record, when she was barely in her teens. Important moments during her life and performances are recalled at appropriate places.

On the duet singing of DKP and her brother D. K. Jayaraman, a well-known critic once wrote (wrongly as it turns out) that the latter had to lower his pitch to match the former's and thus ruined his voice! The correct position is stated in the book. D.K.J. had to sing at a higher pitch to match his sister's, which he successfully did. The pitch was somewhere between two-and-a-half and three-and-a-half kattais. It was a popular combination of male and female voices, perhaps the first of its kind in Carnatic music. The author says that the brother and sister used to practise a kriti 300 times before presenting it at any concert. It is no wonder then that what emerged was a finished and flawless product. One is reminded of Herbert von Karajan's advice to young conductors of Western classical music to throw away their first 100 versions of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. What he meant was that the symphony had to be practised a hundred times to attain perfection in its presentation. The book contains glimpses of DKP as a housewife, guru, grandmother and friend. She had cordial relations with all the artistes like M.S. and M.L.V. Always willing to learn from others thanks to her humility she had lessons in padams and javalis from Brinda-Mukta even after becoming an eminent musician in her own right. She is very much attached to friends and relatives. It is difficult to see her lose her temper. The only occasion she does so is when people close to her do not get in touch with her for a long time! But then it lasts only for a short time.

The book is a cross between a coffee-table book and an authentic and well-written biography. It is lavishly illustrated with good photographs and is printed on art paper. A discography - list of all the recordings made by DKP - would have made the publication complete in its coverage. The short length of the publication adds to its merit in an age when, except research scholars, not many have the time or patience to go through large-sized tomes. But despite its brevity the book gives a good account of DKP as a musician and as a person. It is a valuable source of reference and should find a place in libraries.

Considering the landmark birthday the artiste has crossed, this writer could not resist the urge to pay a tribute to her. This is all the more so because about two decades ago, when she completed 70 years, he published an article on her in the Tamil literary magazine Kalaimagal. She was then gracious enough to write a personal letter of thanks to the writer and his wife for the birthday greetings sent to her. Her letter started with "very, very, very dear" ("miga, miga, miga, anbullu" in Tamil). She said that many people, known and unknown, continued to congratulate her after reading the article. Her handwriting was clear and beautiful like her music. She and her husband, Shri Iswaran, were kind enough to attend the wedding of this writer's son in Chennai in 1993. As she was having a health problem she had to take the trouble to come in a wheel chair.

DKP blazed a new trail in playback singing eschewing romantic songs but singing only chaste kritis and patriotic pieces. "Desa sevai seyya varir", a Bharati lyric, was the first playback song of DKP in Sevasadan, a Tamil movie (1938). It might well have been the first instance of playback singing in Tamil movies, if not in all Indian movies. She sang in "Ramrajya", the Prem Adib-Shobana Samarth starrer in Hindi, dubbed in Tamil (1943).

The song was from the Rama Nataka Kirtanais of Arunachala Kavirayar ("Enakkun iru padam"). There are a couple of songs which the author of the book has missed. One is Papanasam Sivan's beautiful kriti in Kambodhi ("Kunchitapadam ninaindurukum"). Kamala danced to this song in the movie Udayanan - Vasavadatta (1946) starring G. N. Balsaubramaniam and Vasundhara Devi (mother of Vyjayanthimala Bali). The other is a Papanasam Sivan song in Tamil sung in Thyagayya (1946), which featured veteran actor Chittor V Nagaiah. Kamala danced to Bharatiyar's songs ("Aduvome" and "Kottu Murase") in Nam Iruvar (1946) sung by DKP, which contributed in no small measure to its becoming a box office hit. This writer still remembers the thrilling moment around midnight on August 15, 1947, when Britain transferred power to India. Immediately after the ceremony was over All India Radio, Tiruchi, broadcast Bharati's two songs sung by DKP ("Viduthalai" and "Tayin Manikkodi Parir") in a 78 rpm record specially brought out

on the occasion by Columbia. Literally she ushered in the freedom for the country.

Even in her younger days the artiste had great swara gnana and the ability to prepare varnamettu for lyrics. The book refers to her tuning "Veera sudhandhiram vendi ninrar" of Bharati for singing in the presence of Gandhiji when she was around 10 years old. Besides, she has composed chittaswarams for kritis also. This writer knows at least one such instance. It is the chittaswaram for Tyagaraja's kriti "Swararagasudha" in Sankarabharanam. She composed it specially for noted dancer Indu Raman's magnum opus ("Sumati Tyagaraja") in Bharatanatyam performed in Mumbai in the ekaharya (solo) mode featuring the life of the vaggeyakara. On one occasion after rendering "Santhi nilava vendum" ("Let peace prevail") in Tilang towards the end of her concert she announced to the audience that she did not want to sing further to close the performance with the traditional concluding piece in Saurashtram since she had already attained repose. "Saukhyam" (repose) is what characterises her music as well as her personality. She has earned the appreciation of the common man for the timbre of her voice and the manner of delivery. This writer remembers the days six decades ago when the quadrangle of Setupati High School in Madurai was filled to the brim with rasikas belonging to all sections of society eager to listen to her in concerts organised by the Sangeeta Samrakshana Sabha.

She has contributed immensely to taking Dikshitar kritis to the public. Her LP record of his kritis brought out on the occasion of his birth bicentennial in 1972 was sold out within a few days and has become a collector's item. One needs also to acknowledge her bringing unknown kritis of Syama Sastri to the notice of rasikas. Under the National Programme of All India Radio arranged to observe the bicentenary of Syama Sastri's birth in 1962, she sang the varnam in Begada ("Dayanidhe"), a rare and only kriti in Chintamani ("Devi brova") and a Tamil song of the vaggeyakara in Gowlipantu ("Tarunam idamma"), all of which were known only to a limited circle of musicians till then. These kritis have frequently made their rounds in the concert circuit since then. She has contributed to popularising the songs of many post-Trinity composers and lyricists like Papanasam Sivan, Koteeswara Iyer, Suddhananda Bharati, Periasamy Thooran, Srivatsa and others. Her selection of songs for concerts is designed to do justice to all the great vaggeyakaras, past and contemporary. Of course, as in the case of many others, Tyagaraja gets the pride of place. She has not hesitated in making changes in her presentation whenever she felt it desirable. Thus, Bharati's "Parukulle nalla nadu", which was formerly sung in Jonpuri, is now rendered in Valaji in an equally lilting manner.

Her manasika gurus for raga and laya have been Ariyakkudi and Nayana Pillai, respectively. Ariyakkudi was known for his

sledai (punning on words with two meanings). Once he referred to Pattammal as "Padu Patta Ammal" (a lady who has worked hard at music)! What are the main characteristics of DKP's music? In the first place, she is perfectly aligned to sruti all the time. This is, of course, expected of all musicians. The adherence comes out well in the long karvais she engages in at appropriate places in kritis. It is this element which strengthens the feeling of saukhyam (repose), referred to earlier, in an age marked by unabated speed in concerts. Her musical style is a healthy and balanced mixture of both the Nagaswaram and Veenai banis, the long karvais supplemented by gamakas. Her diction is perfect and pronunciation flawless whatever be the language. Despite the fact that her formal education was limited she has mastered pronunciation in a number of languages including Sanskrit, the bugbear of many. Her diction is so good that one can write down the texts of songs when she sings. She often points out how errors in pronunciation, not noticed by many, can distort meanings. A familiar example is from the song "Male manivanna" (Kuntalavarali) of Andal where the phrase "Kodiye vidhaname" (flag and canopy) is sung as "Kodiya vidhaname" meaning the cruel canopy!

There is a good sense of proportion in presenting various aspects of the raga and the song. This is something modelled after Ariyakkudi, who is generally acknowledged

as the father of the modern kutcheri format. Thus there is no excess, whether it is alapana, briga, niraval, sangati or swaraprastaram. Obviously she believes in the principle that any excess use of a good thing can become counter-productive. Her forte is laya. She had in the past attempted complicated pallavis eliciting the admiration of vidwans like GNB. But, later in her career, she started downplaying kanakku (mathematically-oriented presentation) as she felt that bhava is the soul of music and should be given the prime place in concerts. Like her mentor Nayana Pillai, she could count talas with one beat / finger irrespective of kalai and tempo.

While singing a musician has to remember the text of the song, pronounce the words correctly, keep the tala count, understand the meaning of the piece, its bhava modulating the voice accordingly, the lakshana of the raga, its special prayogas and, the last but not the least, the lakshya aspect of concert, all simultaneously. One who achieves this feat is a compleat (perfect or accomplished) musician. DKP is one such artiste. Her patantharam is accepted by many as the right one to follow. To give an example, there was a debate on the raga of "Eppadip padinaro" of Suddhananda Bharati. Her 78 rpm record containing the song was a hit with rasikas and it settled the controversy in favour of Karnataka Devagandhari vis-a-vis the contenders Abheri and Bimplas.

THE MUSIC SEASON - AN OBSERVATION

by Kripa Subramaniam

Come December, the entire Chennai city and now, the suburbs also possess a festive look. The cool Margazhi air is filled with music. The December festival explodes with musical events of unforeseen magnitude. Chennai, which is the seat and bastion of Carnatic music, has music series throughout the year like Ramanavami festival, Gokulashtami festival and Navaratri festival but, it is the December festival which steals the show. Sabhas increase by the year pouring in music of different qualities: artists of varied ages performing, thus choking the rasikas that, at times, the rasika is conned into a situation where he is unable to choose a program from the plethora of sabhas that offer cutcheris.

The Sruti magazine gives the season in numbers. The number of organizations is 75 and the total number of programmes offered is 2669 which includes vocal, instrumental and music ensemble. It is a mind boggling exercise to choose your favourite artists at your favourite venue. The day usually starts with devotional music on specific themes. Usually, ladies in the age group of 40 plus, perform. Performing in the December season is a fait accompli for Mamis of Mylapore. Then comes the lec-dem featuring sublime and serious subjects. Some lectures are very informative and academic specific. In some lec-dems, the veterans talk less and almost perform a Kutcheri since they are denied slots in the sabha festival. One more

season's performance makes them feel contented. Some lec-dems are self projection to the point of ennui.

This year, at the behest of Sangita Kalanidhi Palghat Shri Raghu, each day at the academy morning sessions were dedicated to great past masters like Veena Dhanammal, M.D. Ramanathan, Ramnad Krishnan, etc. The Kalanidhi being a Mridangam maestro, the lec-dems had laya oriented themes. The Shatkala pallavi, Simhanandana Pallavi and the splendour of Misram were outstanding lec-dems. The other three lec-dems that were highly appreciated were J. Venkatraman's Pallavi demonstration, Sangita Kala Acharya V. Subrahmaniam's lec-dem on Subbarama Dikshitar and Narasimhachari's lec-dem on Rhythmic patterns in dance.

The afternoon slots are thrown open for young performers. Of these performers, some are real finds and most of them are mere novices. Opportunities are aplenty. The parents' eagerness in egging their children to perform added to the performers' thirst to somehow be on the stage, makes the scene a little disturbing. Generally there are more performers than listeners in this slot. In fact, most Sabhas have minimum rasikas excepting reputed Sabhas.

Evenings are for star performers who perform on an average of 12 concerts in the whole season. The voice of course

takes a toll. Imagination takes a beating and the best efforts are put to test. It will be ideal in their own interest to limit the number of concerts, give themselves time to rest their voice, contemplate on their music and give more satisfying quality concerts. In the overall scheme of things, the artists playing on the veena, the flute, Jalatharangam, gottuvadyam and mandolin are ridiculously low in number. What is the reason behind it? One needs to put in years of Sadhakam before getting on to the stage. The scene is different on the violin and percussion field. The percussion ensemble is the inthing now and has world wide reach and artists get naturally lured because of name, fame and money.

Coming to the art of Nagaswaram playing, it is totally on the wane. Though there are some Sabhas like the Krishna Gana Sabha that dedicate the whole series to Nagaswaram playing, which is commendable. Perhaps, all the sabhas should put their heads together, so that it is revived and reaches its pride of place.

Another saddening factor is, the average age of listening public is 50 plus. Ironically, the performers are all young ones. Only very few performers attract youngsters. To kindle interest in listening, the music community should strategise. Five decades before, in every household, the girls were taught music whether they liked it or not. In a way, it helped them to enjoy music at a later age and become a rasika. That is how, audience was built. Since the

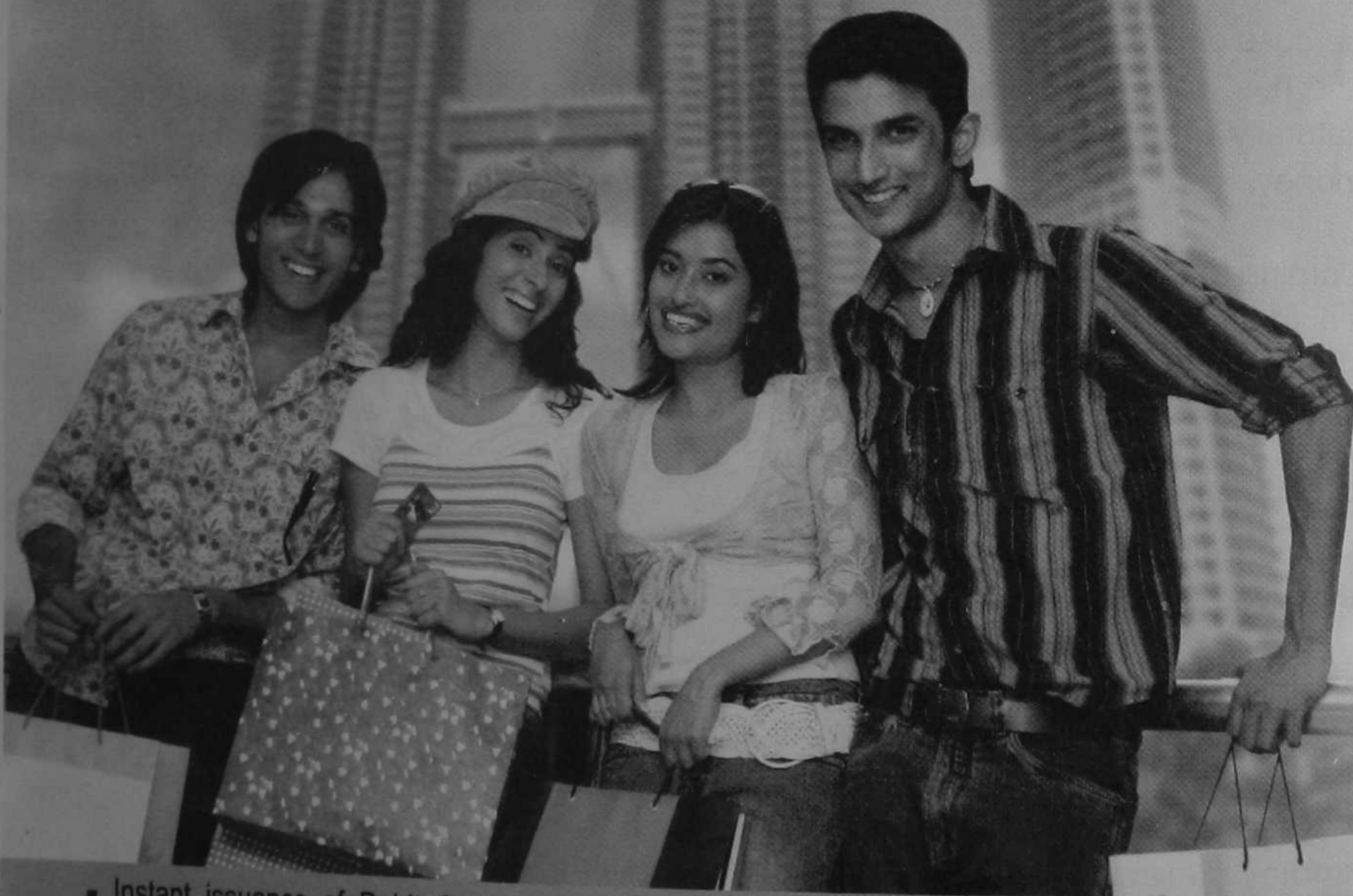
household had music, every member was compelled to hear and men also picked up music in the bargain. Now our children are exposed to different genres of music like light music and pop, rock, rap etc. due to Western influence, nothing wrong in this. Perhaps in every school, Carnatic music should be taught, so that children can appreciate and develop an ear for music. One found that the genre of Padams and Javalis is totally out of the Concert circuit. Padams and Javalis, when learnt, give the performer a greater musical insight into the ragabhava.

Dance series are also conducted by The Music Academy, Krishna Gana Sabha and Kalakshetra. The Chennai dance lovers get to see Mohiniattam, Kathak, Yakshagana, Kathakali, etc. In all, the season was a thumping success but somewhere deep down, the commercialization of the art has robbed the soul of fine arts. As the Grand Finale, Lalgudi's special lifetime achievement award in the 80th year of the Music Academy's history took place on March 9th, 2008. West Bengal Governor, Shri Gopalakrishna Gandhi conferred the award and made a passionate plea to condemn the commercialization that has tarnished the Classical music scene. He said, and echoed, "The rich atmosphere should be maintained. To be distinct yet not elitist. To be rare but not exclusive. To be fastidious but not fetishist. Innovate but without gimmickry. To conserve without mummifying is classical." Let this clarion call by this eminent person be a wake up call for all the Carnatic music loving public.

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INTERVIEW

PURIST TO THE CORE - Dr. R. K. Srikantan

by Jyothi Mohan

He held the audience spellbound with his erudite raga essays, clear diction, undiluted classicism and shruti-shuddham in his kucheri at Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswati auditorium, under the aegis of the Sri Shanmukhanada Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha, on 24th Dec.2007. The very fact that at 88, he can sing a full-length concert with ease, holding notes for a long time in perfect sruti till the end, prompted me to interview him the following morning. He was ready, at the appointed time and eagerly answered all my questions.

Q) I have read that you come from a family of musicians. Could you elaborate on that?

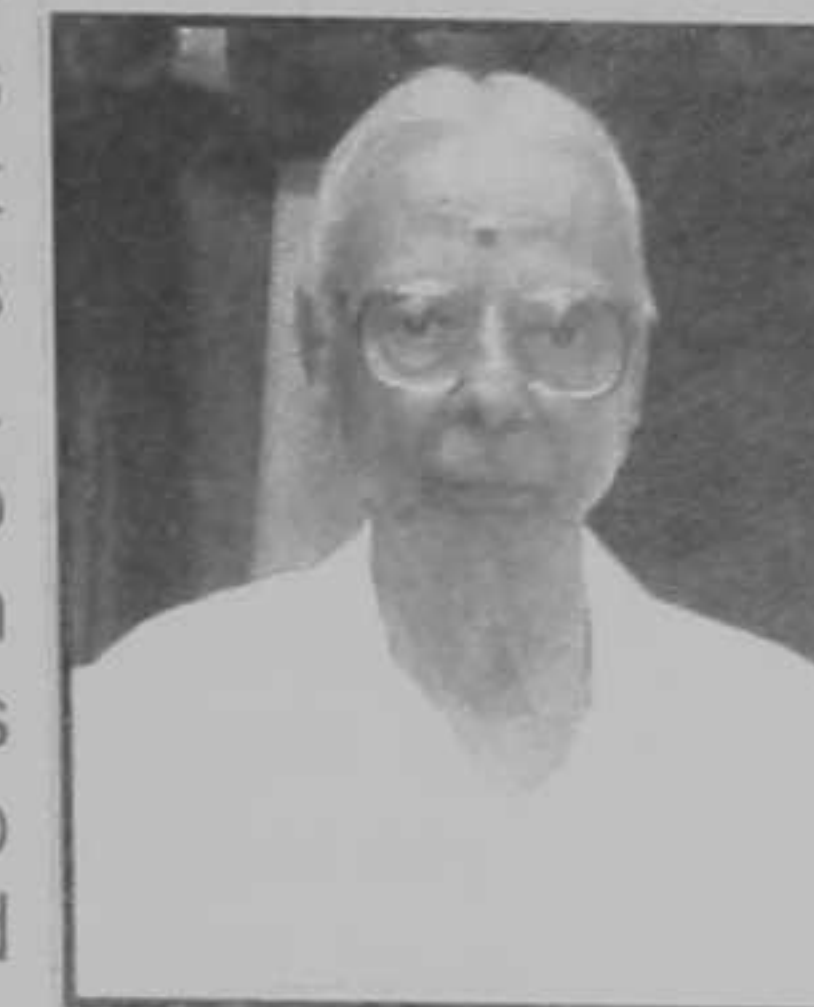
A) I hail from a distinguished traditional family of musicians from Rudrapatnam in Hassan District in Karnataka. My grandfather Sri Narayanappa of Bettadapura was a great musician. My father Sri Krishna Sastry was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Kannada, a noted poet, a versatile artist and also a harikatha vidwan. My brothers, R.K. Narayanaswami (disciple of Musiri Subramanya Iyer) and R.K. Ramanathan were very good singers too.

Q) Can you tell us about your teachers and your music training?

A) After initial training from my father, I was groomed by my brother Sri R. K. Venkatarama Sastry - a leading violinist and a disciple of T. Chowdaiah. When I was very young, I would listen to my brothers sing while my eldest brother accompanied them on the violin. I would try to repeat what I heard. Seeing my deep interest, my eldest brother began

giving me lessons.

At this time, he was offered a job at M a d r a s Corporation Radio. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as I was able to listen to senior vidwans and also learn from them when they stayed with us on their visits to Mysore. I also interacted with great maestros of Carnatic music like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer and Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer, and sang some compositions before them, thus adding to my repertoire. All this helped me in evolving a distinct but pure traditional style of my own.



Q) At what age did you give your first kucheri? Are you satisfied with all that you have achieved in your performing career?

A) I gave my first kucheri when I was about 13 or 14 years of age. My brother would regularly send me notations for kritis, which I would learn. When I would go to Madras, he would correct my rendition. Thus, I kept learning and improving as time went by. I have given recitals in almost all the places where Carnatic music is appreciated. I have had the best of musicians accompany me and their association helped my music grow. I have also received several awards in recognition of my contribution to music. I am happy that I have been able to achieve all this.

Q) Can you mention some of the memorable awards that have been conferred upon you?

A) I have been honoured with prestigious awards like the Sangita Kalanidhi (Music Academy), Sangeeta Ratnakara (Cleveland), Lifetime Achievement Award (SVN Academy, Bangalore), to mention a few. I felt blessed when I was conferred the Saptagiri Sangeeta Vidwan Mani title by the Tyagarajaswami Trust, Tirupati.

Q) Are there any memories in your long career, which you cherish?

A) A few of the concerts I shall always remember are the ones I performed at Haveri and Udipi to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Sri Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa, arranged by the Government of Karnataka. Presiding over the music conferences at Bangalore's Gayana Samaj & Madras Music Academy have also been very memorable occasions.

Q) Did you ever feel that not being in Chennai has made a difference to your performing career?

A) No. I have been regularly invited to perform in Chennai. I am very happy that people from Chennai attend my concerts and are very appreciative about my music. But I do feel that the Govt. of Karnataka can do much more for the cause of classical music.

Q) Did teaching come in the way of performing?

A) I have felt that by teaching, you recognise your limitations and thus try to correct them. Students ask questions and that helps us get a better insight into the art form. While teaching, one is honing one's skills constantly and it provides a lot of practice too!

Q) How would you define good music?

A) Music that is very simple, that which touches the heart is what I would say

constitutes great music. It is not easy to achieve this.

Q) How are you able to sing full-throated till the end of the kucheru at the age of 88?

A) I still practise as well as teach everyday. I do not have any bad habits and follow a disciplined life taking good care of my voice. Artistes nowadays accept too many concerts, strain their voices and end up with problems halfway through their career.

Q) What difference do you find between the shishyas in your time and the shishyas of the present day?

A) Students in my time spent the whole day learning music. They imbibed all that the Guru practised and were never allowed to sing on stage till the Guru felt they were ready. The shishya had to sing a composition till he mastered it and made it his own. Nowadays the student comes for a fixed time to learn music. His preoccupation with studies or a job leaves him with less time to spend with his mentor. The students today are more intelligent and very quick on the uptake too. But in their hurry to ascend the stage and present a lot of new compositions, the exercise seems mechanical and lacks soul.

Q) How did you train your voice to be able to sing with such adherence to sruthi even at this age?

A) We spent a lot of time every morning practising exercises to improve strength, flexibility and speed. Holding a note for a long time at the same volume helps one maintain *shruti* and adds depth to the voice. Nowadays, students sing at a high pitch but do not strengthen the voice, hence the voice shakes, sounds shrill and the *shruti* wavers. They also train their voices for the mike, hence when the mike fails you

fail to hear the singer as his voice has no volume! There is no shortcut to acquiring a good steady voice.

Q) You have been singing concerts for several decades and have had accompanists of both the previous generation and the new generation. How do they differ in their approach?

A) In the earlier days, accompanists always treated the main artiste with a lot of respect. They would listen to the artiste fully before taking their turn. They also adapted their style to that of the main artiste and embellished the recital with their accompaniment. These days, several young accompanists are in a hurry to exhibit their talent. They play what they feel like playing, without listening patiently to the main artiste—they lack *vishranti* and that disturbs. Several times while accompanying a kriti, they tend to play their favourite sangatis which may be at total variance with the *paatanthara* of the main artiste!

Q) Do you find any difference in concert audiences then and now?

A) Those days, concerts were few. They were attended by people who knew and understood music in all its purity and beauty. Today, most people who come to a concert have a limited knowledge of music and are quick to applaud at anything that catches their fancy. This has resulted in speed and technique overtaking slow, leisurely rendering of some of our great compositions in a bid to woo the audience. This unhealthy trend can be reversed only if we educate audiences through music appreciation courses, lecdems etc. Duration of concerts has also come down from the earlier leisurely 4-5 hours to the present day 2-hour concerts! Artistes also perform to half empty halls as there are too many sabhas organising many concerts on the same date and time.

Q) What do you feel about jugalbandis?

A) I feel the 2 systems of music are very beautiful in their purest form. Any attempt to amalgamate the 2 as it happens in jugalbandis is not desirable. You also never get to hear the best of each style as it should be presented; hence I find it a pointless exercise. I also do not care for fusion concerts or the noisy high decibel, eardrum shattering experience, that *taala-vadya kucheris* of today have become. Music should not be an assault on the ears!

Q) We rarely hear you sing ragas other than the *rakthi* ragas. Is that a conscious decision?

A) I do not subscribe to the modern trend of elaborating ragas with limited scope as it gives rise to repetition. The major ragas give one ample opportunities to explore, resulting in a satisfactory presentation with an abundant variety of ideas. I feel youngsters should not take up minor ragas for *ragam tanam pallavi*.

Q) What do you think of people abroad learning through tape or via internet?

A) I am very happy that people abroad are serious about learning music. I have several students in the U.S. whom I teach via internet and over the telephone. They regularly record what they sing after learning from me and send it back to me for correction.

I am optimistic about the future of our music, he concluded.

On that note our conversation ended, as he was returning to Bangalore. It was indeed a delightful 2 hours that I spent in the company of Sangeetha Kalanidhi R.K. Srikantan—a purist to whom music is a *sadhana*, to be sung with *bhakti* to evoke peace and contentment in the listener. □

PAKISTAN DIARY: MUSIC IN OUR NEIGHBOURING COUNTRY

by Dr. Sakuntala Narasimhan

Global travel has become commonplace today, but it is still rare for an Indian to get a visa to travel next door, to Pakistan. The two nations share a common cultural heritage and were in fact one single entity, with no geopolitical boundaries restricting travel, till 1947. I can remember the day of independence in August 1947 when portions of the subcontinent were carved out into a separate nation named Pakistan. Within living memory, then, the two nations have shared a common artistic tradition, including music. And yet, we know so little about the status of classical music across the border. Which is why, when I got an invitation to a conference in Islamabad in December 2007, I jumped at the chance to gather some first hand impressions from across the border. I returned to India just a few days before the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, and had stayed for six days only a few kilometers from the spot outside Islamabad-Rawalpindi where she was killed.

Renowned Indian classical musicians like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Roshanara Begum (a disciple of the famous Ustad Abdul Karim Khan) migrated to Pakistan after partition, but Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (who was born in Lahore in 1903) chose to return to India as he felt that the musical future in Pakistan may not come up to his expectations. Ghazal singer Nusrat Fateh

Ali Khan is as popular in India as he is in Pakistan, as is vocalist Abida Parveen. In fact, when I went on a round of record shops in the Pakistani capital, most salespersons tried to sell me CDs and tapes of Indian artistes like Ravi Shankar and Hariprasad Chaurasia (when I asked to see classical records) or the latest hits from Indian movies. There was little by way of choice in the classical corpus, for various reasons (including, but not restricted to, the belief that Islam forbids music as a pursuit) In conservative Muslim families that observe purdah (in both India and Pakistan) daughters are not allowed to sing in public even if they are talented.

However, samples of the music of legendary singer Roshanara Begum (whose vocal pyrotechnics could be matched perhaps only by the likes of a GNB- it was awesome speed, with amazing clarity) can still be had, in CDs, as are famed singers like Noor Jahan and Mallika Pukhraj (whose name senior citizens among Indians will remember as among the top names of the musical scene of pre-partition India) It goes without saying that Carnatic classical music does not find a following in Pakistan (unlike in some of the Middle Eastern countries, where a sizeable south Indian population makes concerts by artistes invited from India possible).

It is not possible to root out a heritage that

stretches back over two thousand years or more. And so, music there is, in plenty, in Pakistan, albeit in different forms. Qawwali, for instance. Some of the best qawwali renderings of today, are by Pakistani ensembles. I had the opportunity to listen to a live concert of qawwalis on December 12 at Islamabad, by ustads Meher Ali Khan and Sher Ali Khan, and even for one who can look back on more than half a century of live concert listening experience, it was an absolutely thrilling experience. The ustads, who performed with a troupe of 12 other accompanying vocalists (including three of their sons) and an excellent tabla player, showed a strong and robust classical base even in qawwali renderings (what the Hindustani musicians call 'tayyari', as marked by rigorous vocal training and rhythmic control). It was truly a musical evening to remember. The compositions in ragas Bhimpalasi, Kalavathi and Eman that they included in the evening's programme, with sargams and alap improvisations rooted in a classical idiom, resound in my ears to this day.

The late Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan belonged to the Patiala gharana (school or bani) but not many know that another vocalist of the same gharana, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan, was equally eminent as a contemporary, and lived in Pakistan. He is highly revered to this day, and at least one Pakistani music aficionado says he is planning a book on Fateh Ali Khan, using a pile of tapes of his renderings that he has

collected over the years. I got to listen to some renderings by Fateh Ali Khan sahib, and was impressed with the felicity that he showed, every bit as good as Bade Ghulam Ali's. Another classical vocalist of Pakistan, Ustad Amanat Ali Khan, who passed away prematurely, is now remembered through his son Shafqat Amanat Ali Khan (who briefly experimented with fusion music before returning to classical basics).

The duo, Salamat and Nazakat Ali are also well known to rasikas of north Indian classical music (their record of raga Madhuvanti in particular, was a big favourite, some 25-30 years ago, even in India, though they moved to Pakistan after 1947). In fact, Pandit Paluskar, the legendary musician of yesteryear, set up his first school of Hindustani music, the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya, in Lahore, in 1901, much before Bombay (as it was then known) got its own school of music. Some of Paluskar's disciples also went over to Lahore (in undivided India) to teach and propagate classical Hindustani music. Pandit Omkarnath Thakur went to this music school as principal, in the year 1918. Even Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the celebrated musicologist of north India who did pioneering work in terms of collecting and writing the notation for hundreds of khayal, hori, tarana and other compositions, moved to Karachi to practice there as a pleader, after completing his LL.B. examination in 1890.

One evening we were taken for a stroll in a

public park on a hill top outside the capital, where we came upon a rustic instrumentalist playing a haunting tune on the rabab. This instrument has disappeared from India and is no longer heard. What a nugget of musical discovery! It reminded me of the day I sat through music performances by Iranian artistes who played an instrument remarkably like the santoor, and another recital by an American musician in the US who performed on the dulcimer (also resembling the santoor, in shape, tone and technique). Such experiences drive home the point that music knows no barriers, of geography or politics or even race and religion. It also brought to mind two other music programmes that I had the privilege of attending recently, one in Madrid where a Spanish male vocalist sang flamenco numbers that were full of gamakas similar to those we use in Carnatic music, and the other in Bangkok in June 2007, where a Thai classical vocal ensemble presented 'alapana' that closely resembled south Indian vocal inflections. How wrong we are, to think that only Indian music employs gamakas!

If Ravi Shankar of India sells in Islamabad and Fateh Ali Khan of Pakistan sells in Bangalore, do we really need to take note of political demarcations between the two contiguous countries? Culture and music in particular - binds a people even if politics divides them. People who sing together, or

appreciate the same music together, learn to live together, in harmony. Because harmony is what music is all about. Perhaps someone will find a way of circumventing the restrictions between the two countries, at least for cultural exchanges. My guruji, Ustad Hafeez Ahmed Khan, travelled to Pakistan for concert tours, during the 1970s. Other artistes have also gone over, on official, sponsored tours, while artistes from over there have come to India to regale our audiences and rasikas. But sadly, cultural exchange and enrichment is dependent on political sanctions and approval. If Europe can remove boundaries and have a common currency (the Euro) as well as a common visa regimen (the Shengen visa, which permits travel within all EU countries, without separate visas) perhaps some day, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh can also fashion some kind of cultural-musical 'dialogue' and traffic

We have cricket as a binding force, with players coming over from Pakistan and going over from India in turn. And a good time is had by all- when I was in Islamabad, the Pakistani cricket team was playing a test in Bangalore, and during intermissions in the conference proceedings, the locals were as interested in the day's score as we visiting Indians were. If sports can bring people together across borders, so can music too, through rhythm and melody. □

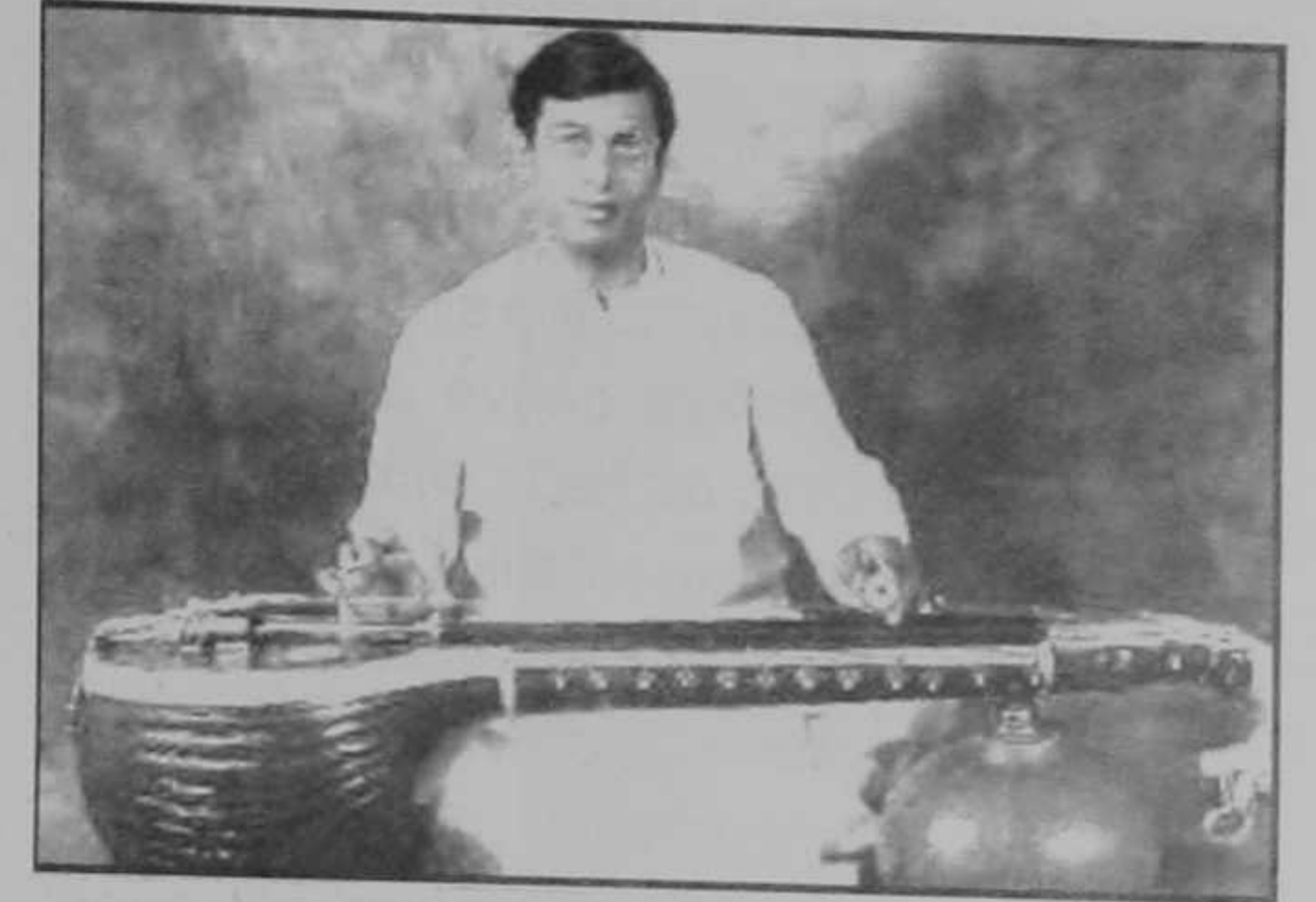
ARTISTE SPOTLIGHT - CHITRAVEENA N. RAVIKIRAN

by Savita Narasimhan with inputs from Akkarai Subhalakshmi and Vishaal Sapuram

A beautiful morning in the month of margazhi. A dazed girl sits in rapture through a demonstration of akaara sadhakam in Mayamalavagowla, and decides on the spot to learn from the master, who lays down a condition - at least a year of complete attention only to music. That admirer turned disciple was myself, and the teacher was Ravikiran. The single year has stretched to twelve years of joyful learning and ceaseless practice.

A modern and even futuristic approach in a traditional mould - that is Ravikiran in a nutshell. As a teacher, he was a hard task master. His stipulation was "I will teach as fast as you can learn". That would put the onus on the student, who would have to bend backwards to keep up with his demands in class. And demands there were many: total alignment with shruti, control on kalapramanam, good voice production and modulation, correct gamakas and so on. To him, these are basic requirements, prerequisites to learning a large repertoire of the great composers. But his strictness in class is tempered with patience, empathy and humour. Brimming with anecdotes and self-styled witticisms, classes with him are colourful, an event in themselves.

While teaching kritis, he insists on correct enunciation (in accordance with the language of the composition) and on understanding the meaning of the words.



For instrumental students, his insistence on correct sahityam influences the way they handle the lyrics while playing the instrument for instance, rendering certain longer and complex phrases on a single string (as opposed to using multiple strings) to bring out the sahitya bhava. He lays emphasis on understanding the composer's mind frame in each composition.

In creative aspects like raga alapana, neraval etc., he has always dwelt on the importance of listening to the great yesteryear musicians, and on trying to imbibe not the substance, but the spirit of their music. He taught us to listen analytically to a spectrum of styles, from T Brinda to GNB. He would also demonstrate some intricate phrases on the chitravina, which we would try to reproduce vocally with the same clarity and precision, often in vain! His primary focus is on perfection with correctness, and his loyalty is to the raga as we know it today. He has always

stressed that lakshya (aesthetics) can be achieved without sacrificing lakshana (grammar). And what better than being a practising example himself!

The music-loving fraternity is well aware of his immense prowess as a musician. He is equally at home playing the simple khamas swarajati *Sambashiva enave* as the main piece of a concert, as he is with an 8-kalai pallavi or a shataragamalika (100 ragas) pallavi! His music is full of classicism, subtle nuances, intricacies and depth. On stage, he is a constant image of enthusiastic leadership, giving encouragement even when anyone makes a mistake and ensuring that everyone is motivated to do their best. In addition, his on-stage humor raises everyone's spirits and adds to the concert effect. He even observes his students accompanying him on stage, directing them now and then to look up and smile at the audience. With Ravikiran Sir, one learns that musicianship does not end with music, and there is a multitude of other skills needed for success as a performer.

I would like to dwell on some of the lesser known facets of this remarkable musician.

Composer

Ravikiran is a multilingual composer, with over five hundred compositions in 5 languages - Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada and Hindi. His extensive repertoire of the works of our greatest composers, and his incisive and analytical understanding of the various styles therein have equipped him with the tools to create a vast variety of compositions, the range

of which includes kritis, varnams (tana and pada), padams, javalis and tillanas. Full of ingenious wordplay, his works brim with melodic beauty and rhythmic complexity. On public request from a well-known artiste, he created overnight, two beautiful compositions in the rare ragas Balahamsa and Narayanagowla. There are compositions with varying speeds (*mam pahi*, *todi*) and changing gait (*tillana*, *Hamsanadam*). He is the first composer to have created pieces in all the 35 talas in the Carnatic system. He has also composed music for acclaimed operatic ballets like *Lakshmi prabhavam*, *Savitri* and *Vinayaka Vaibhavam*.

Researcher

As mentioned earlier, Ravikiran has a tremendous repertoire of thousands of kritis and other compositions. Ever open to suggestions and corrections, he, constantly updates his knowledge by referring to linguistic scholars and senior musicians. His latest contribution to the Carnatic field is his extensive research in Oottukkadu Venkata Subbiah's works. He has tirelessly collected, analysed, polished and helped to publish this phenomenal composer's works in multiple volumes. Through numerous vocal concerts and lectures, he has brought many rare compositions into the open. His recently published book *Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi - Life and Contributions*, is a consolidated effort at presenting the multidimensional facets (poetic, melodic, rhythmic and operatic) of this hitherto neglected composer. □

INTERVIEW

RISING STAR - SIKKIL GURUCHARAN

by Sudha Subramaniam

When five year old Gurucharan sang a popular film song for his grandparents, they were amazed at his 'sruthi sudham' and decided that he must pursue music. Initial exercises and songs like *Mudaakaratha Modakam*, *Madhuraashtakam*, *Kurai Onrum illai*, etc. were taught by his mother, Mythili Chandrasekaran, a lecturer in Government Music College. When the family returned to Chennai in 1990, tutelage continued under Vaigal Sri S.Gnanaskandan, a sishya of Dandapani Desigar and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Associated with the troupe of Sri Poornam Viswanathan and later Kala Nilayam, Gurucharan's father Sri V. Chandrasekaran has acted in several hit plays, apart from serving as Marketing Manager in Palepu and Co. Definitely he has also passed on several charismatic character-traits to Gurucharan, as was evident in some of the presentations Gurucharan did during his brief stint as radio jockey at Worldspace.

As a student of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College, Gurucharan sang *Deenasharanyane* in Karnaranjini to the Principal Dr. Ramaratnam standing in the corridor. The Principal was so captivated that Gurucharan was asked to sing for the weekly prayer hour of the College for three whole years!

Winner of the Gold Medal and Best

Outgoing Student Award. Gurucharan went on to do his Masters in Financial Management. Yet Destiny had earmarked him to be a singer. Winner

of several awards and accolades such as 'Bharat Kalachar' in 2005 by Yuva Kala Bharati, 'Isai Chudar' by Karthik Fine Arts in 2005, 'Swarna Venkatesha Dikshitar Award' at the Music Academy Conference 2002, 2003 and 2004; 'Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer Award' for best raga renditions by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in 2002; to name a few, Gurucharan has been commended by innumerable newspapers, critics and editions. Once, R.Srinivasan in the Indian Express asserted, "Gurucharan's concert gave him enough scope to assert his growing maturity and consummate artistry. His flair for creativity and graceful delineations in the raga portrayals were commendable. This A grade artist of AIR has praiseworthy sahitya bhavam, slur-free diction sans padachedam and sruti cohesion".



On December 23rd 2007, the Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha conferred the Sangeetha Shiromani Award on Shri Sikkil Gurucharan for Carnatic vocal. The award ceremony was followed by a concert of Sikkil Gurucharan who was accompanied by Nagai Shriram on the violin and S.Shankaranarayanan on the Mrudangam.

We gained a rare insight into this promising singer's personality with a few simple questions, very well answered:

1) *As the grandson of Sikkil Kunjumani and the nephew of Sikkil Mala Chandrashekar, would you say that the great ripples created by you in the musical world owe a lot to genes and heredity?*

No doubt about that. I owe a lot to them. In fact my grandmothers always point out that it is the gene of their father Natesa Iyer that is responsible for instilling musical interests in every member of their family and if they take it up seriously and come up to a certain standard, it is because of God's will. This is not only in my case but is quite evident in such other musicians who hail from a musical family.

2) *At what age did you feel the affinity for music? Did you plan to be next in the line of your family's great contribution to the world of Carnatic music and did you realize that it would be singing that would*

catapult you into fame?

I would risk using the cliché "I never dreamt of becoming a musician". It's true. My grandmothers found me to be a little talented when I was a child and put me under Gnanaskandan sir to learn vocal. They were pretty clear that I should not learn the flute. After several years of forced training and sometimes forced concerts too, I felt the affinity for music only in my college days. Even when I was in 12th Std; the good marks I got, made me aim for a professional course like CA or CWA and getting an MBA. Somehow I joined B.Com at Vivekananda College and they made me sing frequently during prayer meetings and also cultural events. At the same time, slowly several Sabha patrons started giving me chances and after some nice exposure from the media, I decided not to play with music. By the time I finished college, I was serious. At that time, my father told me "Singing is going to be your profession and you are going to be famous only because of it!" I am grateful to all who are making it happen.

3) *We would like you to share your experience in making the musical album, 'Madirakshi' with the renowned pianist Anil Srinivasan.*

I am first of all very happy that it is drawing appreciation from all places and many youngsters are finding it really different and soul-stirring. We both share

the same sensitive ideas about Carnatic music and I think that's what made the album rich in classical flavor. He was my school senior and after a gap of 6 years we met again in a recording where he composed the music I was to sing. It was very unique and inspired me to perform to the best of my ability. So we decided to take it further by handpicking some songs which were rich in melody and lyrical beauty. We then approached Charsur, who welcomed it with open arms and released it in Sep 06. Last year a sequel to it was released too, it's called Maaya!

4) *Who is your inspiration?*

This question alongwith "what is your favorite raga?" are the toughest ones to answer !!! Well. I am inspired by any music that is something we could have never imagined. My grand mother Neela says "*neneche paaka mudiyaadha alavukku paadinaar! !*" Of course in the positive sense. For example, I listen mostly to legends like Madurai Mani, Semmangudi, Voleti Venkateswarulu, Tanjore Kalyanaraman, KVN, MLV, MS and DKP because their music was path breaking. There is something attractive in each one's music that makes us totally engrossed. So I end up imbibing a little of each aspect involuntarily. And of course my guru, Sri Gnanaskandan whose voice culture and sincerity are some of the innumerable virtues I try to grasp.

5) *During your tutelage under Vaigal Sri S. Gnanaskandan can you share something about your relationship with your guru.*

My guru always stressed upon the importance of Guru bhakti. He believes that it will ensure that our journey in music is fulfilled. Like all gurus, he started out as a strict taskmaster, then seeing his students' progress, he mellowed. Now he is a member of our family. He always encourages his students to sing everywhere and give their 100%, irrespective of other considerations.

6) *What would you say about adapting a piano to Carnatic music, where gamakas are so important?*

If you are asking about Madhirakshi and Maaya, I would retort saying that Anil never played Carnatic in either of them. Its not Carnatic music on piano we are trying to bring out. I sing Carnatic and he plays western notes that gel with the raga. Maybe this is why we don't call our style as fusion music, But for a pianist to play Carnatic music entirely, it is a big challenge as gamakas are the lifeblood of our music system.

7) *How have you tackled any criticism that you have received while teaming up with Anil Srinivasan on the piano? What do you feel the future holds in store for you?*

We received more feedback than criticism. Sadly the word criticism is

construed as negative alone. I think if a critic has commented on areas of improvement in your music, you must give some thought to it. In our case, this new genre with the piano, there has been some constructive criticism (mostly from well wishers) to enhance the value of something we have hit upon. We are working on improving the sound we have created. After all, that's what we all do right? Keep striving till we achieve the best. Perfection, as they say, is a journey and not a destination.

8) *How would you express the depth of Carnatic music?*

I am too young to understand the depth of Carnatic music, leave alone expressing it!! I have just started to understand the mystic experiences Carnatic music offers to those who practise it. While you listen to others sing, it sounds divine and when you sing, it offers a totally new dimension and projects a spectrum of colours like bhakti, joy, sorrow, ecstasy, lament. In addition to it, the magic of Manodharma in the form of extempore raga alapanas, thanam, swaram and neraval. I think the more you fathom the depths of this divine art, the deeper it goes!

9) *During your performances overseas, did you notice any distinct individuality either about the setting, the audience or the reception to Carnatic music? How would you express it?*

We have to understand that in other

countries apart from India, Carnatic music is still not abundantly available. US and UK are brimming now with organizations sponsoring music festivals. So the listeners there are really looking forward to some good music as they don't get it as frequently as we do. So the audience involvement is total throughout and that inspires musicians to give their best shot! Reception among western audience is also very heartening as they want to find out why a musician is singing notes (swaras) suddenly after singing lyrics in a composition, why the percussionist stops suddenly (during ragas). The urge to learn is inborn in them.

10) *Other than this, if there is anything you would like to share with us, please do so.*

I just want to keep singing and living up to the standards that people expect. I would also like to add that Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha gave me the first chance to sing in Mumbai and till date they have been very kind in recognizing my progress at regular intervals. The latest of them being the much coveted "Shanmukha Sironmani award" which I consider a great blessing of Sri Mahaperiyava. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who is creating such wonderful opportunities for musicians like me to flourish and take Carnatic music to the hearts of every music lover in the world. □

AESTHETICS WITH SPIRITUALITY IMPARTS EXPERIENCE

by N. HARIHARAN

Audiences at classical music concerts comprise a wide spectrum. Connoisseurs who savour the technicalities are a few. Large sections are enthralled by a rich resonant voice, tuneful tonality of the instruments, melodic appeal of the ragas, the cadence of the rhythm, fervour in rendition of the devotionals. While initiation in the grammar and idiom of classical music may be needed for critical appreciation, by continued, concentrated listening over a long period, one's aesthetic sensibilities will be aroused and one's spiritual awareness will be elevated.

Indian classical music and dance traditions have been preserved and promoted by the temples in olden times. Music and dance were medium for worship. The temple administrations gave sustenance to artistes. Some were retained on the staff. Others were invited for performances at special functions and festivals. Large numbers gathered as much to worship the deities as to savour the music. Even the kings used to attend such events. Music was part of one's being.

As royal patronage of the arts increased, the standard of learning and performance improved. Rewards for attainments and excellence proved an incentive for deep study and dedicated "sadhana". The kings used to maintain troupes of performing artistes who would entertain gatherings at palace festivities. Distinguished performers were honoured at "durbars" and some were appointed court musicians, known as

"asthana vidwans"; just to mention two, Swati Tirunal and Serfoji Maharaj. It was the golden age for the arts.

As the venue shifted from temple nrandapams and courtyards to the courts of royalty, the repertoire too underwent a change. The earlier exclusive epic and puranic themes were replaced by literary lyrics on beauties of nature, the glory of valour, philosophic posers, etc. But the spiritual core of the tradition stayed on.

The affluent landed gentry (zamindars) too used to be patrons of the arts. They gave lavish grants to artistes for their livelihood and gave medals and citations for brilliant performances. With the abolition of monarchy and zamindari (curtailment of land holdings), the elite public had to take upon themselves the task of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage. Thus were born the sabhas, associations and trusts. The venues became posh halls and auditoria with acoustic aids to amplify sound. Listeners and viewers in hundreds/thousands could enjoy performances seated comfortably on upholstered furniture, with the added facility of airconditioning. Concert halls became socializing as well as entertainment venues.

Commercialism too crept in among the artiste community along with the promotion of a star system. The high spiritual ideals of the performers of old and the holistic approach of the audiences have become history. Yet the memories of the past do

give a continuity to interest in the classical arts and their learning and propagation. A major activity of the music sabhas and arts societies of today, is running educational institutes, to provide facilities for learning music and dance to interested children and adults as well as encouraging upcoming talent by giving them exposure to the public.

Organising talent promotion concerts is a cherished objective of many institutions. That is indeed a laudable activity which provides a forum to promising young talent aspiring for recognition. This writer has noticed exceptionally gifted young performers at these events. It augurs well for the future of Carnatic music, Dance and theatre. Several academically brilliant students, in their spare time, have been learning the classical arts; and they do turn out to be brilliant performers in the arts too. Some have formed theatre groups as well.. Degree holders (all professionals) in engineering, technology, finance and accounts, even a few doctors, have become highly rated performing artistes.

A commendable activity of some of the institutions is to hold music competitions and give prizes to the winners. Some give special awards for excellence. It has to be stressed here that the involved performance of a young artiste is far more impressive than the repeat recital of a professional. A well known English writer William Hazlitt says in an essay: "The ambitious performance of a young amateur is far more exhilarating than that of an artiste of established repute." How true this is one realizes while attending promotional events.

A lament I have often heard in cultural circles is the dwindling audiences at classical music and dance concerts, reflected in the decline in membership of the cultural trusts. Some say interest in the traditional arts is on the wane. That is only partially true. The electronic media have been tapping the recognized talent, both young and old. And television is a formidable competitor as an impresario. The TV channels can give a ringside view to the viewers; they have a mass audience in homes (which fetches them big advertising revenue). Yet the sabhas cannot be displaced. They alone can provide the right ambience and long performance duration to the artistes to give full scope to their creativity and innovation skills. The inspiration from a live, interested audience, only the concert halls can provide, not the TV studios.

The inherent strength of Indian culture which has withstood the onslaught of invasions from the West and still remains rooted in the consciousness of the populace, makes one optimistic about its future. The increasing interest in the West these days in Indian art forms and culture augurs well for its sustenance and growth. The cultural institutions in India should fly aloft their flags with more enthusiasm and dedicate themselves to their activities with added vigour. Yes. God helps those who help themselves.

(N. Hariharan had been a cultural reviews writer of "The Times of India" for three decades plus.)

MAHASWAMI SANGEETANJALI

by Jyothi Mohan



To commemorate the naming of the Shanmukhananda Sabha auditorium as Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswati auditorium every December, an eminent artiste is invited to offer Sangeethanjali to the Mahaswami. Rendering the 7th Sangeethanjali to the Mahaswami on 24th December 2007 was Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. R.K. Srikantan, a musician of great repute who belongs to the shishya parampara of Saint Tyagaraja. After receiving the blessings of H.H. Pujyasri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal, 69th Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Dr. Srikantan commenced his recital with Dikshitar's *Mahaganapathe* in Natanarayani. He followed it up with *Sri Parvati Parameshwaram* in Bouli, also a composition of Dikshitar. He then took up *Sri Sankaraguru* in Nagaswaravali - all these rarely heard compositions were rendered in chaste style. Tyagaraja's *Janaki Ramana*

in *Suddha Simantini* was sung with feeling. A brisk *Kanjadalayatakshi* of Dikshitar in *Kamala manohari* was followed by a leisurely *Sahana*. The kriti chosen was *Giripai* of Tyagaraja. The main raga for the evening was *Kalyani* - the raga was unfolded in all its traditional grandeur minus frills and trills. He was able to hold the notes even in the upper octave with perfect *sruti shuddham* to the delight of the audience. Violinist

Madhavan's raga delineation was also impressive. *Himadrisuthe* of Syama Shastri was taken up for elaboration. The *neraval* and *swaraprasthara* reflected his erudition and adherence to *sampradaya*. The *tani avartanam* by Sri Nandakumar on the mridangam and Shankar Laxmanan on the ghatam received great appreciation from the discerning audience.

Dr. Srikantan rounded off the concert with two Kannada *devaranamas* - *Manasu Karagade* in Kanada and *Karuniso Ranga* in Mohanam, rendered beautifully, both not heard often in Mumbai.

With a strong voice capable of traversing the 3 octaves with ease even at this age, perfect alignment with *sruti*, enthusiasm coupled with abundant energy, Dr. R.K. Srikantan's Sangeethanjali was an inspiration to all the artistes present in the auditorium.

SRI SHANMUKHANANDA NATIONAL EMINENCE AWARD

by Jyothi Mohan



The 6th Sri Shanmukhananda National Eminence Award for lifetime contribution was conferred upon Dr. Padma Subramanyam, the legendary Bharata Nrityam exponent on the 23rd of December, 2007. This award is given to eminent artistes who have excelled in the field of performing arts. It carries a citation, a cash award of Rs. 1 lakh, a silver lamp and a bronze icon of Lord Shanmukha.

Sri V. Shankar, in his welcome address, said that in the world of music, our classical music scored over the rest. It is laden with bhava as bhakti forms the core. He spoke at length about the contribution of Sri Balakrishnan, Padma's illustrious brother, who passed away recently. The citation was

presented by Sri V. Shankar and the award was handed over by Shri Venkiteswaran. Several cultural organisations, dance and music institutions, besides several members of the dance fraternity, felicitated Dr. Padma Subramanyam.

Replying to the citation, Dr. Padma Subramanyam said that the Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha was a *chakravarti* among sabhas. She said that her family was connected with the Sabha since decades and therefore this award was very special as she felt it was like an award from the family.

She recalled that her Guru Shri T. M. Ramachandran passed away just before

she was to present her thesis for her doctorate. Bereft of guidance at the most crucial time, she suddenly realised that all the direction she needed at that juncture came from the Mahaswami of Kanchi and she received her doctorate.

She said that the Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha was a beacon for generations to come as it truly cared for our rich heritage and hoped to inculcate in generation next, true values of culture as a way of life. She also cautioned youngsters against relying solely on audio / video aids to learn music or dance. She stated that learning from a good Guru and seeking his blessings was vital to become an artiste.

She concluded that Bharata Muni had a vision for India. Although he is worshipped in all countries of Asia, in our country we have not given him his due. She hoped that this award would give her the strength to fulfil her desire to make the Indian aware of this visionary.

This was followed by presentation of the Shanmukha Sangeetha Shiromani Awards which have been instituted to honour outstanding young musicians in recognition of their talent. The award consists of a cash award of Rs. 25,000/- a citation and a bronze icon of Lord Shanmukha. This year, the recipients of this award were Sikkil Gurucharan - vocalist, Nagai R. Sriram - violinist and Manjusha Kulkarni Patil, vocalist in the Hindustani style. All three awardees attributed their success to the efforts of their Gurus. Sikkil Gurucharan is the grandson of the famous Sikkil Sisters and has learnt under Shri

S. Gnanaskandan. Nagai R. Sriram hails from a family of musicians and is a disciple of Nagai Muralidharan. He has been awarded the best violinist prize by the Music Academy, Chennai for 6 years. Manjusha Kulkarni Patil is an M.A. in music, besides doing her Visharad. Learning in the gurukul tradition from Pandit D. V. Kane Buva, she has won the first prize and gold medal in semi classical as well as classical vocal music and is an A grade AIR artiste.

Following the awards function was a vocal recital by Sikkil Gurucharan. He began the concert with Tyagaraja's *Ora joopuju* in raga Kannada gowla. Gopalakrishnan Bharati's *Enneramum* in Devagandhari that followed was evocatively rendered. An elaborate Kalyani followed by Sriram's beautiful rendering of the same on violin led to the Tiruppavai - *Ambarame*. The neraval by both artistes evoked spontaneous appreciation from the audience. The famous Swati Tirunal Pada varnam *Sumasayaka* in Kapi was sung next. A fast-paced *Kanjadalayatakshi* of Dikshitar in Kamala Manohari was followed by a leisurely elaboration of Natabhairavi. Nagai Sriram stole the show with his brilliant rendering of the raga. *Sri Valli Devasenapathe* was sung with feeling and the neraval-swaram impressed for their imagination. The tani avartanam by S. Shankaranarayanan earned a lot of appreciation. A ragamalika viruttam on Shankaracharya was sung with devotion. Bhaja Govindam in Maand was followed by Oothukkadu Venkatasubbier's tillana in Sindhubhairavi. The concert concluded with the Mahaswami's Maitrim Bhajata.

SANGEETANJALI TO SRI SEMMANGUDI SRINIVASA IYER BY MUMBAI MUSICIANS

by Janaki Krishnamoorthi



In February, several prominent Carnatic musicians from all over Mumbai congregated under one roof to pay their tribute to the doyen of Carnatic Music, Padmavibhushan Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, on his hundredth birth anniversary.

Semmangudi Maama, as he is fondly referred to by many, belonged to the golden era of Carnatic Music that produced several stalwarts but he was definitely the leading star among them. Winner of several awards and titles he headed the renowned Swati Tirunal Academy, Trivandrum for two decades.

A purist to the core, he stood like a rock protecting the pristine legacy of Carnatic music. His music rich in tradition and

knowledge, his style of rendering raga alapanas, kalpana swaras mesmerized millions including senior vidwans.

He who inspired several musicians during his life time continues to be an icon for senior and younger musicians even today- a fact that became more evident in the grand event that was held on February 17, this

year at the basement hall of Sringeri Sharadambal temple, Chembur, Mumbai.

Titled "Sangeetanjali" the programme was organised by renowned Mumbai musicians Smt. Kalyani Sharma, Smt. Radha Namboodiri, disciples of Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Smt. Alamelu Mani in association with Sri Naadabrahmam Chembur.

One of its kind, the event kick-started the centenary celebrations of Sangeetha Pitamaha in Mumbai which is now being carried forward by sangeetha sabhas in Mumbai. The programme presented solely by Mumbai based musicians also had the unique feature of bringing gurus and sishyas together under one platform.

And the whole day reverberated not only with choice compositions that were close to the great legend's heart but also with his thoughts, his observations and experiences. Even the chocolates distributed at the beginning and refreshments served at the end of the day were chosen keeping Semmangudi Maama's preferences in mind!

Aptly, the programme was launched by the golden voice that reigned the Carnatic music world for over seven decades. Yes, the recorded voice of Sangeeta Kalanidhi Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's "Vatapi Ganapatim Bhaje" kriti in Hamsadhvani raga set the mood for the function.

Soon after, some of the special invitees - musicians, friends and relatives - shared their own experience and perception of the Sangeetha Pitamaha with the audience.

The special invitees to the function were Sri S. Swaminathan and Smt. Visalakshi Swaminathan, Semmangudi Maama's son and daughter-in-law; Vidwan Sri P. Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, one of the first batch of disciples to come under the tutelage of the great Guru at Swati Tirunal Academy Trivandrum; Sri R. Kannan, popularly known as Kalki Kannan and Smt. Lakshmi Kannan, family friends of Semmangudi Maama and Sri A.R. Subramaniam, Chairman of Sri Naadabrahmam Trust.

Sri S. Swaminathan recalled how his illustrious father apart from being a great musician was also a deeply religious man and a disciplinarian. "He lived and breathed music till the last. Of course it was the

support of my mother who took good care of him and shouldered the household responsibilities that enabled him to focus totally on music. A perfectionist, he would not give up till his disciples learnt the compositions flawlessly. He treated all his students with great affection" revealed Sri Swaminathan.

"We - all his five children do sing - but we did not pursue it much as our father did not want us to go through the same difficulties he encountered" added Sri Swaminathan on a lighter note.

The next speaker, Vidwan Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar was choked with emotion to say much. "He was an outstanding musician and I have no words to describe his magnificence. I only wish to pay my respects to him" he remarked.

Sri R. Kannan and Smt. Lakshmi Kannan shared several interesting information about Semmangudi Maama including his fondness for music, food and playing cards "But nobody can surpass him in his passion for music. Once on our way to Kanyakumari along with Sri T.T. Krishnamachari and Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi and others, we stayed in Tirunelveli at the then collector Sri C.S. Ramachandran's residence. There after dinner Semmangudi Maama began singing at our request and continued non-stop till sun rise the next day. He was a great musician and a great human being" he concluded.

Smt. Lakshmi Kannan recalling his great service to music said that Semmangudi Maama commanded respect but at the

same time, he was very affectionate. "He generated a large family of disciples who are now spreading Carnatic music all over the world. There are many great musicians but I don't think they generated so many eminent disciples as Semmangudi Maama - that is something very exceptional" she reflected.

And one of his senior disciples, Smt. Kalyani Sharma, also the architect of "Sangeetanjali" spoke next and provided an insight into her Guru's art of teaching, administrative skills and his contribution to music. "He was not only an outstanding musician but also a teacher par excellence - considered guru for all the gurus. He published several books that brought to fore compositions of Swati Tirunal, Sadasiva Brahmendra, Ambujam Krishna etc. He also popularised Samudaya Krithis of the Trinity and others like Navavaranam, Navarathiri / Navagraha krithis, Prahlada Bhaktha Vijayam, Nauka Charitram etc. - by teaching them to his students and by presenting them at concerts" Smt. Sharma recalled. She also added that he was a great administrator who elevated the Swati Tirunal Academy to great heights during his tenure as its head and elaborated on his teaching methods.

"My guru always felt that there was no need for any innovation or revolution in Carnatic music. He used to say that the composers and other seniors have already done all that is necessary and handed it over to us in a platter. All we have to do is to preserve this treasure by learning the compositions from good gurus, perfecting them and teaching them to youngsters" Smt. Sharma said

echoing her guru's thoughts.

Apart from his own family of disciples the master musician had many ekalavya sishyas who adopted him as their Guru. Sri Anantarama Bhavathar of Naadabrahmam who belongs to that clan spoke next and expressed his thoughts on his manasika Guru. "I have been crazy about his music from childhood. I have attended several of his concerts. Nobody can sing like him - his 'Marubalka and Ksheenamai - still ring in our ears. Youngsters today know very little about such great musicians. And programmes like this expose them to the great music and musicians. And with all your co-operation we hope we will have more and more of such programmes" concluded Sri Anantarama Baghavathar.

There were some unexpected special guests from Chennai who also graced the occasion - Smt. Seetha Rajan, a senior disciple of Semmangudi Maama and Sangeetha Kalanidhi Smt. R. Vedavalli who also shared their experiences of 'Sangeetha Thatha' as he was fondly referred to by Sri Kanchi Periyaval. After the enlightening accounts, the audience was taken through an engrossing expedition of the great musician's life, music and his musings through a documentary.

Then began the core part of the programme - the musical tribute. The Sangeethanjali began with Guru Vandanam - rendering of Samudaya krithis - by disciples of Smt. Kalyani Sharma.

Then Mumbai's eminent Gurus and their Sishyas occupied the stage in turn to pay

their tribute. The guru-shishya parampara has been a fundamental component of our Carnatic music and Semmangudi Maama always emphasised the importance of learning from a Guru. To highlight this guru-shishya tradition the organisers of the programme invited the Gurus and Sishyas to pay tribute together on one platform.

Nearly hundred artistes - 14 gurus with their numerous disciples along with violin and mrudangam artistes - paid their tribute to the Bhishma Pithamaha by rendering krithis that were either his favourites or popularised by him.

The gurus who participated in the Sangeetanjali were Smt. Kalyani Sharma,

Smt. Alamelu Mani, Smt. Radha Namboodiri, Smt. T.R. Balamani, Smt. Vijayalakshmi Nathan, Smt. Bhagavathi Mani, Smt. Saraswathi Moorthi, Smt. T.S. Kaveri, Smt. J. Susheela Mani, Sri P. Vaidyanatha Bhavathar, Sri T.S. Anantharama Bhagavathar, Sri T.N. Ashok, Sri G. Balasubramaniam & Smt. Rajalakshmi Balasubramaniam.

The Sangeetanjali ended with Semmangudi Maama's taped voice rendering ragamalika slokas and Mangalam.

The day's event concluded with a summing up by Sri G. Balasubramaniam and vote of thanks.

Form IV

(See Rule 8 of Press & Registration of Book Act)

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I, Jayaram Mani, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and behalf.

HAPPENINGS AT THE VIDYALAYA

by Nalini Dinesh

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS 2006 - 2007

Scholarships for 2006 - 2007 were awarded to 66 students by Shri V. Krishnamurthy, subcommittee member, on Saturday 15th March 2008 at Essar Hall of Bharatiya Complex.

S. SESHADRI MEMORIAL TALENT EXPOSURE CONCERT -12 Jan 2008



The little girl was dwarfed, even by the modest platform at Essar Hall, but her voice rang out crystal-clear, etched with delicate gamakas, infusing weighty, familiar compositions with a freshness that prompted a member of our knowledgeable audience to proclaim her as a future D.K. Pattammal, Dharini began her concert with the Kamboji Ata Tala varnam Sarasijanabha. Her Keeravani alapana brought out the essence of the raga - she endearingly had to be prompted to do the alapana, as she forgot all about it and launched into Kaligiyunte directly! Kalpana swaras in 2 kaalams were sung at

Bhagavata Agresarulaku.

A visibly nervous Ranjani and Aishwarya took the stage next and opened with the Malayamarutam varnam. Ranjini elaborated Hemavati for the main item, Dikshitar's Hariyuvatim with neat kalpana swaras at the pallavi. The Purandaradasa Devarnama Rama namava nodi nodi rounded off the presentation.

SRI PURANDARADASA & SRI TALLAPAKAM ANNAMACHARYA DAY - 19 January 2008

B.N. Mahathy began and ended her recital with Annamacharya kritis - Vandeham in Hamsadhwani raagam and Toliyanu Maragu in Neelambari, both in khanda chaapu thalam. Among other Purandaradasa kritis, were Ille Vaikuntham in Varaali with a short alapana and Tamburi Meettidava in Sindhubhairavi. Despite a hoarse voice that day and her occasional grimaces at shruti lapses and sangatis gone flat, she gamely went about her recital with a bright smile.

Tamburi Meettidava, also sung as a virutham by Shantha Raman in the third slot, has interesting lyrics that describe alternately, physical actions like strumming on the tanpura, wearing the dancing bells

and singing songs of Vithala and spiritual aspirations like crossing the sea of mortality and reaching Vaikuntha.

Smt. Latha Sitaraman & Smt. Saraswati R. presented Annamacharya kritis including Nammo Nammo Raghukula Nayaka in Nattai and Kummaniyadi shruti in Poorvikalyani, and Purandaradasa kritis including Bharati Deviya in Suddhakalyani and Enu Dhanyalu Lagume Entha Maanyalu in Thodi. Saraswati sang alapana for Nattai and Poorvikalyani. They concluded with Muddukare Yashoda in Kurinji of Annamacharya.

Interestingly, both Purandaradasa and Annamacharya, have composed kritis comparing their ishta devata with the nine gems - Rama Nama Ratnahara and Muddukare Yashoda respectively. Annamacharya likens Krishna, the simple cowherd to the ruby, the killer of Kamsa to the hard diamond, the lord glowing in all three worlds to the emerald, the red-lipped lover of Rukmini to the coral and so on, and concludes that such a gem as Krishna cannot be found even in the milky ocean.



Smt. Shantha Raman gave a zestful recital, cheered on by a heartening number of her students in the audience. So infectious was her spirit, that Vishwanath Ramaswamy on the violin and Shri Devananda Menon on the mridangam, were enthused to give of their best that evening. Shantha's voice was clear and facile over all three octaves. Sharanu Siddhi Vinayaka, in Sowrashtam was the Purandaradasa opener, followed by the MS classic Sriman Narayana in Bowli of Annamacharya. The folksy Brahman Okate in Bowli was also sung towards the end. Bowli in Sriman Narayana, and then in Brahman Okate - how different the same scale sounds in two different genres of music! Some lyrics that sounded different from the usual way they are sung were charanu of Sriman Narayane which was sung as charanam, and naada priya in Narayana Te which was sung as radha priya.

SHYAMA SHASTRI DAY-2nd February 2008



A group of students of Smt. Hemalata Veeramani, Principal of Mulund Fine Arts

Society's music school presented rare kritis including Paahimaam Sree Rajarajeswari in Nattai, Karunajoodu in Sreeragam, Trilokamatha in Paras, Kaamaakshi in Begada (with a short alapana by Nandini) and concluding with Shankari Shankari, a Kalyani kriti (with a short alapana by Nisha) which ends with a prayer for good fortune, victorious bliss and auspiciousness (Mangalam Jaya Mangalam Shubha Mangalam). It is a challenge to learn kritis like Shyama Shastri's, which are seldom heard, and a greater one to train and prepare students for the stage with those, credit is due to Smt. Hemalata on this score.

Smt. Shantha Balasubramanian and Savitha Balasubramaniam sang Pahi Sri Giriraja in Ananda Bhairavi, Birana Varalichi in Kalyani (with a short alapana by Savitha), the Todi swarajati Raave Himagiri Kumari, Sari Evaramma in Bhairavi (with a good alapana by Shantha), ending with Nannu Brovu Lalitha.

Kanchana Balaji's recital got off to a good start with Saroja Dala Netri in Shankarabharanam and Mayamma in Ahiri, though her omitting both the charanams in Saroja Data Netri was a surprising dampener, Mayamma was replete with bhava. The violinist made quite a few shruti bloopers especially during Parakela Nannu (Kedaragowla) and

Palinchu Kamakshi (Madhymavati) that threw the vocalist a little out of gear, but her experience and training ensured a high standard of rendition.

Gaurav Ranganathan and Dakshinamurthy Pillai provided violin and mridangam support respectively, and Pushpa Anantharaman compered the show.

PATNAM SUBRAMANYA IYER, POOCHI SRINIVASA IYENGAR, MUTHIAH BHAGAVATAR, MYSORE VASUDEVACHAR AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS' DAY - 15th March, 2008

This is one composers' day which always throws up a lot of delightful surprises, and I often feel like a little girl digging into trunks in her grandmother's attic because the word "contemporary composers" covers such a wide canvas of composers with such gems in their output.

Smt. Bhavani Srinivasan presented six songs of six different composers. Manasa Vruta in Abhogi of Patnam Subramanya Iyer includes, what is known in technical parlance as a yamaka - the word Manasa, used as such, or in conjunction with other words in multiple lines, takes on multiple meanings. Her main item was the Mohanam kriti Ra Ra Rajeeva Lochana of Mysore Vasudevachar with a detailed

alapana. The kritis were rendered neatly with their raga bhava and sahitya bhava intact.

Priya Suresh presented some rare kritis from the vast repertoire of her guru Smt Kaveri like Shikhivahana, a racy kriti of Muthiah Bhagavathar in Hamsadeepakam raga (janya of Gowri Manohari with s r g m d s arohanam and sampurna avarohanam) and Lalitadasar compositions Ra Ra Muralidhara in Vijayanagari, the nishada varja janyam of Hemavati and Kailasa Pathe in Subhapantuvarali. Thodi and Bhairavi alapana were performed, for Muthiah Bhagavathar's kriti Siddhi Vinayakam and Patnam Subramanya Iyer's Nee Padamule respectively. Kaamita Phala was repeatedly heard as Kaamita bala in the latter kriti. The mridangist scored and missed during the Sowrashtra kriti Ninnujoochi - he filled in the avartana pauses nicely, but missed emphasizing on key points of the lyrics.



Shri Vignesh Ishwar gave an excellent recital of well-known kritis and a couple of rare ones too. Mysore Vasudevachar's classic Brocheva in Khamas (though with quite a few sahitya faux pas like **chaturaananaadi**), Patnam Subramanya Iyer's Sahana kriti Rama Ikanannu with a brief alapana, and Ambanadu vinnapamu in Todi made famous by Musiri (who can forget his neraval at Vaaraahi Vaishnavi) were his main items. Some novelties were, Raja Raja in Niroshtha raagam (Niroshtha is a janya of Shankarabharanam and the name means "without lips", and sure enough, the swaras of the raagam and why, even the entire sahitya of the composition could be pronounced without touching the lips together, s r g d n s, s n d g r s being the arohanam/avarohanam), and Madhura Bhashini composed by Vignesh's guru T.S. Anantharama Bhagavathar in Kanchabhavapriya raagam (janya of Jyotiswaroopini with arohanam s r g m p n s and avarohanam s n p m g r s).

Gokul Srinivasan provided the violin support and Karthik Srinivasan on the mridangam provided percussion support. Praveena Gowthaman facilitated the proceedings.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF T. S. NANDAKUMAR'S PERCUSSIVE ARTS CENTRE

by Sudha Subramaniam



On March 1st, 2008, the ten-year milestone of mridanga vidwan Shri T. S. Nandakumar's Percussive Arts Centre supported by Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha was celebrated at the Shanmukhananda Sri Chandrashekarendra Saraswati Auditorium. The inaugural prayer by Sanjeev Chimalgi, rendered in Sanskrit, meaning, 'May We Walk Together' enchanted the packed audience. President of Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Shri V. Shankar, in his address, emphasized that great gurus like Shri Nandakumar are the custodians of our heritage; our art and culture that one generation must pass on to the next. As Shri R. Rajan, compere of the event, spoke of the immense reservoir of talent nurtured by Shri Nandakumar, the curtains rose to reveal the strength of over a hundred

young hearts, comprising even graded artistes. The mridangams, morsings, ghatams, kanjiras, konnakkols, thavils and other percussive instruments held centre-stage, conducted admirably by Guru Nandakumar.

As the youngest sishya, Rohan Subramaniam, aptly summed up, "We are tender saplings. Our Guru waters us with the power of knowledge, so that we may grow into tall and strong trees". Indeed, it was his deep conviction in his students' abilities and his extreme commitment that prompted Guru Nandakumar to lay the foundation of the TSN's Percussive Arts Centre. The past annual events of the institution have featured leading names like Prof. T. N. Krishnan, Dr. N. Rajam, Ms. A. Kanyakumari, Dr. N. Ramani, etc.

Recipient of the Padma Bhushan and Sangeet Natak Academy Award among others, the internationally acclaimed violinist Dr. L. Subramaniam, whose concert marked the culmination of the celebration, was all praise for the students' performance. Smt. Kavita Krishnamurthi, renowned singer and better half of Dr. Subramaniam, simply summed up the performance as 'Awesome'. □



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